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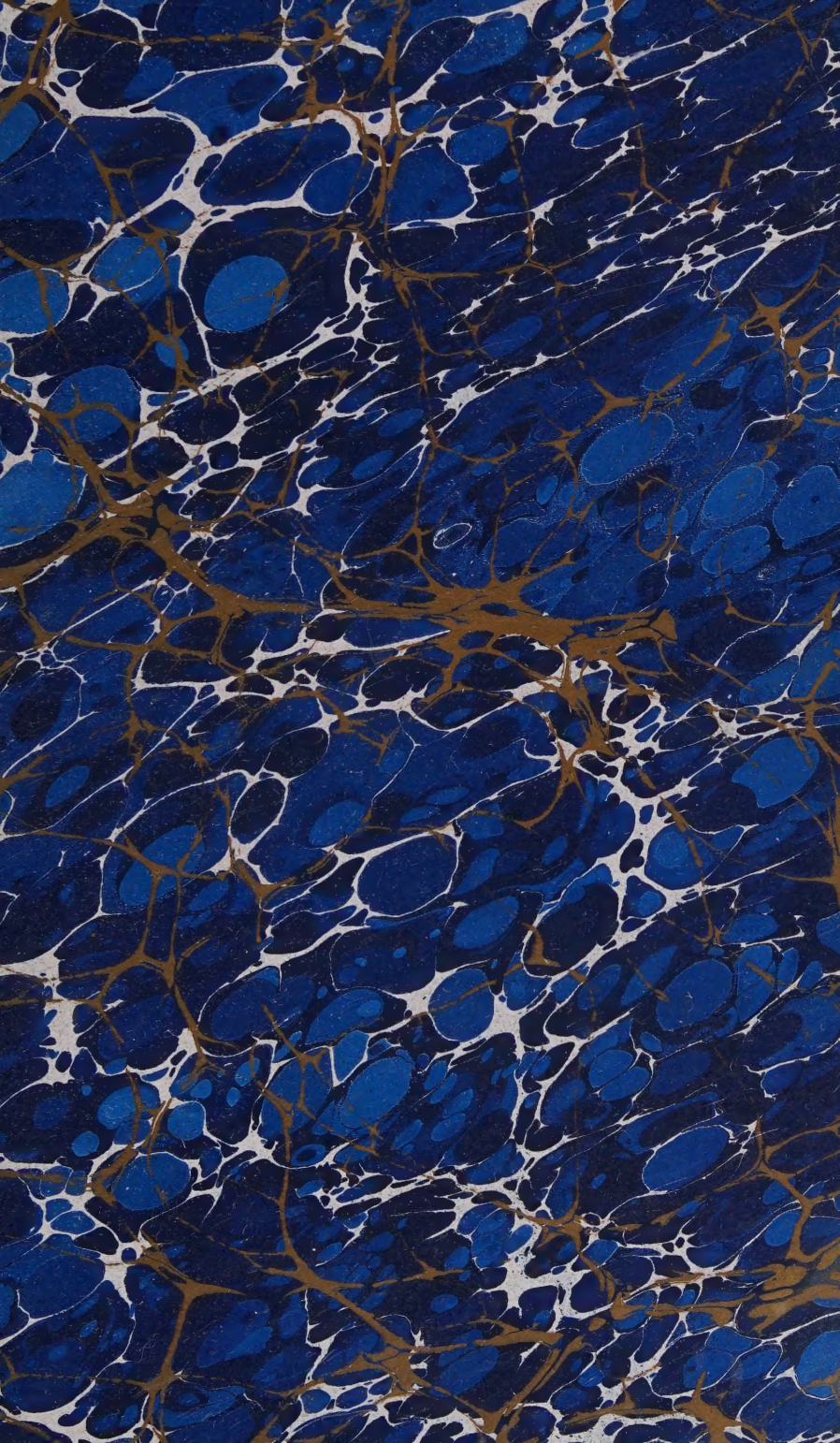

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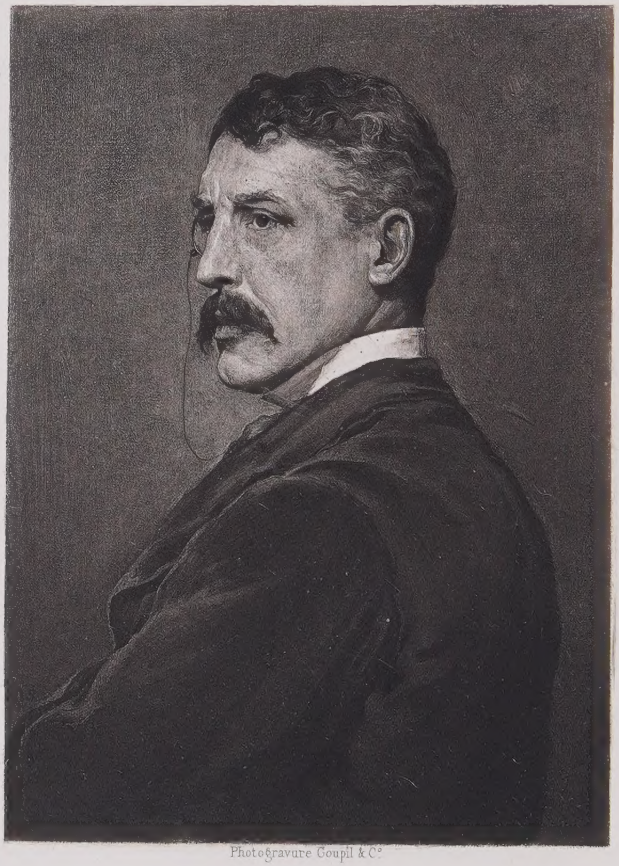
# MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT

*ON AND OFF THE STAGE.*



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S. B. BANCROFT

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Sir Squire Bancroft K.B

London: Richard Bentley & Son. 1888

# MR. & MRS. BANCROFT

## *ON AND OFF THE STAGE.*

WRITTEN

BY THEMSELVES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

**Fifth Edition.**

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1888.

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# CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

## *OUR JOINT NARRATIVE.*

### CHAPTER I.

THE SEASON OF 1874-75.

PAGE

An odd story of mistaken identity—House-hunting—*School for Scandal* withdrawn—John Hare's secession from the company—Production of *Sweethearts*—Mrs. Charles Kean on Mrs. Bancroft's Jenny Northcott—Revival of *Society*—Death of Tom Hood—Recollections—Royalty in the green-room—Preparations for the *Merchant of Venice*—Engagement of Miss Ellen Terry for Portia—Mrs. Bancroft and the nigger—*Sweethearts* and *Society* withdrawn, and the *Merchant of Venice* produced—A failure to be proud of—The part of Shylock—Letter from G. A. Sala—*Money* in rehearsal again—The *première* of *Our Boys*—Signor Salvini—His performance of Othello before the actors of London—G. H. Lewes on his death-scene in *Hamlet*—A letter from him—Reproduction of *Money*, and its effect—A morning performance with a small programme—Holiday abroad: the missing box—A persistent snorer—The Duke of Connaught—A mountain storm—A lucky meeting with Mr. Critchett - - - - - - - - 3—38

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SEASON OF 1875-76.

PAGE

*Masks and Faces* in preparation—Changes in structure and treatment—Autograph letter of Margaret Woffington's—Mrs. Bancroft on the character of Peg Woffington—On the reality of emotion on the stage—Charles Reade's criticism on the acting—Letters from Sir William Fergusson and George Vandenhoff—Commission to Byron to write a new comedy—*Wrinkles*—*Les Pattes de Mouche*—*The Moonstone*—Revival of *Ours*—Adaptation of *Nos Intimes*—Illness of Mrs. Bancroft and Miss Ellen Terry—Impending changes in the company—A dinner with H. J. Montague and Henry Irving—Our annual holiday—Practical jokes——Anecdote of Sir Julius Benedict—At the Eggischorn—Impromptu amusements—The Bel Alp—Meeting with Professor Tyndall - - - - - - 39—72

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SEASON OF 1876-77.

Redecorating and refurnishing—Production of *Peril*—Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and Mr. Arthur Cecil join the company—A great success—Theatrical banquet at the Mansion House: the chief guests—A tribute to T. W. Robertson—A seaside holiday: a veritable Mrs. Malaprop—Real and sham poverty—First series of *matinées*—Death of Mrs. Montagu Williams (Louise Keeley)—Journey to Paris to see Sardou's *Dora*; price paid for it—John Parry's farewell—Mrs. Bancroft's first public reading—Complimentary benefit to Henry Compton—Benjamin Webster's last appearance—An episode—Letter from him on *London Assurance*—A trip to Paris—*The Vicarage* and *London Assurance* produced—Mrs. Bancroft's part as the Vicar's wife—Letter from James Anderson—Mrs. Langtry—*An Unequal Match* in rehearsal—Holiday-making—A 'Dramatic Contrast'—

PAGE

First visit to the Engadine—The Stelvio Pass—Blocked at Gossensass—Innsbruck and Salzburg—The salt-mines of Berchtesgaden - - - - - - 73—111

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SEASON OF 1877-78.

A strong company—Some applications for engagements—Production of *An Unequal Match*—*To Parents and Guardians*—Souvenir from Jefferson—His temperament and his acting—Finding a name for *Dora*—*Diplomacy* decided on—Mr. Ollier's offer—Edmund Yates's verses on 'A *Première* at the Prince of Wales's'—*Diplomacy* produced—A triumph—Letter from Sardou—*The Saturday Review*, Wilkie Collins, and Clement Scott on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's parts in the play—A penalty of success: Burnand's *Diplunacy*—Letter from Fanny Kemble—Benefit performances for John Clarke and Mrs. Mellon: Madame Celeste's last appearance—Death of Charles Mathews—Pierre Berton: letter from him—An altered cast—Away to the mountains again—A stammering tenor—The enraptured doctor—Letter from Jenny Lind—A reading at Pontresina—An adventure: lost on the mountains—Death of H. J. Montague—Meeting with Fanny Kemble—Paris—The Exhibition—J. L. Toole in disguise—Introduction to Sardou—His house at Marly-le-roi—A practical joke - - - - - - - 112—150

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SEASON OF 1878-79.

A month at Brighton—Death of Phèlps and Wigan—Scheme to build a new theatre, and its abandonment—The end of *Diplomacy*—Reproduction of *Caste*—Letter by Mr. Bancroft to the *Times* on the production of plays by English authors—Death of John Clarke—His weaknesses—His lameness—Great kindness shown to actors by medical men—Sir William Fergusson—Sir Morell Mackenzie—Mr. Critchett—Dr. Quain—*Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*—

PAGE

'Celebrities at Home' in the *World*—Count Gleichen—Prince Leiningen—Sudden illness of George Honey—A tragedy behind the scenes—A summer programme—*Heads or Tails*, *Sweethearts*, and *Good for Nothing*—The Comédie Française company at the Gaiety—A banquet at the Mansion House—Why we took the Haymarket Theatre—Holiday notes—An old lady and her parrot—Pleasant companions—Death of Fechter—Entertainment for the church at Pontresina—*Der erste Komicer* - - - 151—186

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SEASON OF 1879—80.

Last months at the Prince of Wales's Theatre—*Duty*, Albery's adaptation of *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*—An anxious time—Second visit to Sardou—Death of Buckstone—An imitation of him—Farewell revival of *Ours* at the Prince of Wales's—Thoughts on an opening programme—Letters from Dion Boucicault and Lester Wallack—The reconstructed Haymarket—Its chief features—J. L. Toole's sorrow—Refusal of a testimonial—Farewell words at the old house—First performance at the Haymarket—The Pit Question—The dense fog—Letter from Sothern—Appreciative notices of the new arrangements—A supper-party at the Lyceum—Lord Houghton—Sardou's *Daniel Rochat*—A new version of *Le Mari à la Campagne*—Count Gleichen's busts of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft—Mr. Bancroft sits to Pellegrini ('Ape') for a portrait—Revival of *School*—Extraordinary success—Impressions of Modjeska's acting—Offer from Irving to take part in the *Corsican Brothers*—Visit from Sothern—Deaths of George Honey, J. R. Planché and Tom Taylor—The Coquelins see *School*—Their impressions in *La Vie Humoristique*—The Haymarket sublet—Brilliant close of the season—Again at Pontresina—Visit of the Prince and Princess Christian—Another entertainment—Romance and reality—Paris—A visit to Père la Chaise—Malvern—Letter from Arthur Cecil—*Un vivo Cavallo* - - - - - - 187—230

## CHAPTER VII.

THE SEASON OF 1880-81.

PAGE

The 'Windsor Strollers'—Some good amateurs—Mr. Hollingshead as Pantaloon—Resumption with *School* and *The Vicarage*—Burnand's comedy in rehearsal—A carriage accident—*The Colonel* relegated to the Prince of Wales's—*Masks and Faces* in preparation—'Black Tuesday'—The Haymarket that evening—Death of Sothern—Love of practical joking—His opinion of Mrs. Bancroft—Revival of *Masks and Faces*—Alternation of Triplet and Colley Cibber with Arthur Cecil—Letter from Mr. Gladstone—Death of Lord Beaconsfield—Shakespeare on popular favourites—A morning call—Edwin Booth and Henry Irving—The Meiningen Company—*Society* and *Good for Nothing* revived—Letter from Ludwig Barnay—A practical joke by Mr. Bancroft—More wanderings abroad—A story of Como — On the sea and in the East — Impressions of Gibraltar — Malta — Syra — Smyrna and Constantinople - - - - - - 231—273

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEASON OF 1881-82.

*Plot and Passion—A Lesson*—Letter from F. C. Burnand—Mrs. Langtry's *début*—Abraham Hayward's criticism in the *Times*—Engagement of Madame Modjeska for *Odette*——Mrs. Langtry's resolve to become a professional actress — Her appearance in *Ours* — Dinner at Marlborough House to leading London actors—Death of the Dowager Countess of Essex ('Kitty Stephens')—Sardou's new play —An incident at the Théâtre du Vaudeville—*Odette*—Modjeska's acting—Foundation of the Actors' Benevolent Fund—Characteristic letter from Dion Boucicault—Death of Benjamin Webster—His services to the stage—Letter from Henry Irving—Engagement of Mrs. John Wood and David James—Arthur Cecil leaves the company—Parting

PAGE

letters—End of a brilliant season—Again in Switzerland—The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol—Church and stage—Charles Wyndham's correspondence—A joke at Cadenabbia—A 'Funeral Note' - - - - - 274—306

## CHAPTER IX.

THE SEASON OF 1882-83.

Lord Wolseley and Tel-el-Kebir—A bright season—Production of *The Overland Route—Nearly Seven*—Sardou's *Fedora*—The audience at the *répétition générale*—Sarah Bernhardt's acting—Burning of the Alhambra—Christmas with Edmund Yates at Eastbourne—Death of Miss Kelly—Reminiscence by Mrs. Bancroft—Revival of *Caste*—The acting of Mrs. Stirling—Herman Merivale's adaptation of *Fedora*—Engagement of Mrs. Bernard-Beere and Mr. Coghlan—A sketch by Linley Sambourne—Reappearance of Mr. Hare as Sam Gerridge in last representation of *Caste*—A memorable evening—Stage tributes: a story of herrings—*School*—Death of Mr. Charles Walter—Ominous prognostications with regard to *Fedora*—Its great success—Removal to Berkeley Square—Banquet to Henry Irving at St. James's Hall—Farewell supper given to him at the Garrick Club by Mr. Bancroft—Mr. Hare's proposal of his host's health—Holiday at Homburg—Letter from the Duke of Albany—Death of Mr. Dutton Cook—A visit to Zermatt—The Matterhorn - - - - 307—343

## CHAPTER X.

THE SEASON OF 1883-84.

Resumption of *Fedora:* Mr. Bancroft as Loris Ipanoff—A story of his eyeglass—Letter from Mrs. Langtry—Mr. Pinero's comedy, *Lords and Commons*—Its origin and production—'Behind the Scenes'—Resolution to retire from the cares of management—Revival of *Peril* and *A Lesson*

PAGE

—Sittings for a portrait to W. W. Ouless, R.A.—Death of the Duke of Albany—A letter of condolence—Deaths of Charles Reade and H. J. Byron—Reade's friendship—Anecdote of Byron, and characteristic letter from him—His impromptu jokes—His manner of writing his plays: an amusing incident—*The Rivals*—Pains taken in its production—The cast—The first night—A costly awning—The Engadine once more—A story of filial love—Winter impressions—A fortnight at Brighton—Mr. and Mrs. Sala—Baron Huddleston: his story of a notorious criminal—The lady of the manor—Correspondence on the prospective retirement—Letters from F. C. Burnand, Wilkie Collins, W. S. Gilbert, John Hare, Lord Londesborough, W. W. Ouless, J. C. Parkinson, A. W. Pinero, B. C. Stephenson, Moy Thomas, and Edmund Yates - - - 344-391

## CHAPTER XI.

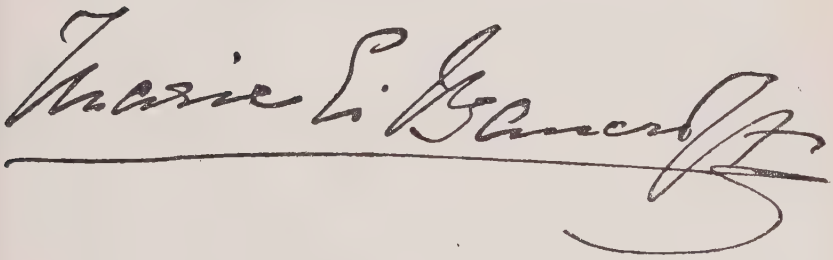
### OUR FAREWELL SEASON: 1884-85.

Announcement of the Farewell Season—'Interviewed' on the subject—Stage salaries—Long runs destructive to art—Short revivals—*Diplomacy*—Speech on opening night—An escape from fire—Banquet of the Dramatic and Musical Sick Fund: Mr. Bancroft proposes the health of Mr. Hare—*Masks and Faces*—Opinion on Mr. Bancroft's Triplet—Mr. J. M. Levy—The dramatic critics—*Ours*—A 'scratch bill': *Katharine and Petruchio*, *Sweethearts*, and *Good for Nothing*—A popular error refuted—Synopsis of productions at both the Prince of Wales's and the Haymarket theatres, and brief account of their ratio of success—Mrs. Bancroft on her characters in Robertson's comedies—Afternoon performance of *Masks and Faces* at the Crystal Palace—Besieged for seats for the farewell night—Letter from Sir William Brett (Lord Esher)—List of members of the company—Letter from J. L. Toole—Compliments and personal tributes—The great crowd—The farewell programme—The audience—Clement Scott's Valedictory Ode, spoken by Henry Irving—Mr. Bancroft's speech—Letters

PAGE

from Sir Algernon Borthwick, Mr. Robert Browning, Sir John Monckton, Mrs. Keeley, Mr. Charles Wyndham, and 'A Lover of the Engadine'—Mr. Bancroft as Chairman at the Royal General Theatrical Fund dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern—Loyal allusions—Mr. Sims Reeves—The toast of the evening—Letter by Mrs. Bancroft—L'envoi - - - - - - 392—448

Our joint Narrative.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE SEASON OF 1874-75.

COMMENCED BY MR. BANCROFT.

It was at this time that a strange circumstance occurred which I afterwards related at the request of an old friend, and which appeared in a Christmas annual in 1879, under the title of 'Our Doubles.' I will repeat so much of the odd story as happened at this particular time.

Soon after we had recommenced work at the little theatre, after our holiday abroad, I received a letter from a debt-collector living in Camden Town, stating that he was instructed by Mr. ———, the proprietor of the ——— Hotel, and also of some livery stables, at Ventnor, to apply to me for immediate payment of an account for the hire of carriages and horses in the previous September, while staying at the said hotel, and left unpaid when I went away. Having passed the whole of my holiday in Switzerland and Venice, and never having been in Ventnor in my life, I was a little puzzled by this application. At first I thought it must be a practical joke, but eventually, after a further request for payment, I answered

the letter—rather angrily, I think—pointing out the mistake which had been made, and stating my real whereabouts at the time I was charged with driving about the Isle of Wight.

From the debt-collector I heard no more; but one evening, a few weeks later, when I had arrived at the theatre and was reading some letters before dressing for the stage, the hall-porter knocked at the door of my room, said that a gentleman wanted to see me, and handed me a card.

My surprise may be imagined when I read that my visitor was the proprietor of the ——— Hotel, Ventnor. I at once told the hall-keeper to show him into the green-room, which, so early in the evening, was unoccupied, and in a few minutes I went downstairs.

'Good-evening.' 'Good-evening, sir.' 'You have asked to see me. I am Mr. Bancroft.' 'So I see, sir,' said 'mine host' cheerfully, and with a decidedly provincial accent.

I looked at him well. His face was frank and honest, and his manner self-possessed.

'You have applied to me,' I next said, 'for money you say I owe you?' 'Yes, sir; the amount remained unpaid when you left my hotel in September.' 'When I left your hotel! Do you mean to assert that my appearance has not at once convinced you there must be some mistake?' 'Not on my side, I think, sir.' 'Do you mean to say,' I still asked, fairly amazed, 'that you believe you recognise in me

the person who owes you this money?' 'I see no difference,' was the immediate reply, 'except that he had a moustache.'

At this time, and throughout my holiday, my face was clean-shaven, for I was acting the part of 'Joseph Surface.'

'Tell me something more of this,' I said; 'for your manner, at any rate, convinces me of your honesty.' 'I thank you, sir,' replied my visitor; 'and but for your straightforward denial, I would have sworn in any witness-box that you were the person who, with a lady, passed at my house for nearly a month as Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, of the Prince of Wales's Theatre.'

Here, I thought, was my chance of convincing the man he had been imposed upon. I turned up the gas directly under a large photograph of my wife, and said, 'That is a portrait of Mrs. Bancroft.'

My visitor rose, looked at it well, then said, 'Yes, and a very good likeness it is, sir!'

I was nearly paralyzed with amazement, and hardly remember what passed next; but I feel certain that the landlord, although his eyesight was throughout the interview my enemy, became as impressed by the honesty of my repudiation as I was by the frankness of his assertions.

I learnt that our doubles had lived for a month on the best his house afforded, that at the end of their stay there was a little difficulty about the bill; they said they could not pay then, but would send

the money from London, as the theatre was about to reopen (a statement which agreed with the newspaper advertisements), and that they must go.

To this proposal 'mine host' naturally objected. Eventually the man was allowed to depart alone, leaving the lady with her luggage to be redeemed. The money for the hotel bill, it seems, was sent in a few days, and the hostage released; the claim sent in to me being for carriage and horse hire which had been overlooked at the time, the livery-stable business being separate from that of the hotel.

When, at last, my visitor went away, he left, I feel assured, full of conflicting emotions, hardly knowing which of his senses he best could trust.

We neither of us to our knowledge have ever seen either of these people, and can give no opinion of this apparently singular likeness; all the more remarkable as it applied to two people. Sometimes I have wondered if the lady could have been the person of whom Mrs. Bancroft writes in an earlier chapter. One day, shortly before the interview I have related, and prior to the re-opening of the theatre, I was asked by Meredith Ball, our musical conductor, how I liked a new play which had just been produced at the Criterion Theatre. To my answer that I had not seen it yet, he seemed greatly surprised, and exclaimed, 'Not seen it! why, weren't you there last night?' 'Last night,' I replied; 'certainly not. I have only just returned to England; in fact, reached Charing Cross last even-

ing.' 'That's very extraordinary,' said Ball. 'One of the band, who has been with me for years, and has been filling up the vacation by playing in the orchestra at the Criterion, told me just now that he saw you and Mrs. Bancroft there last evening in a private box.' Afterwards this friendly musician, who of course knew us both quite well, could hardly be convinced of his error. Later on two young friends of ours wrote home from Italy—either from Rome or Florence—to say, after expressing their surprise at our being abroad at that time of year, 'that we had both cut them dead twice on the same day, first in the street, then at a theatre;' while reference to an English newspaper would have told them that we were playing in *Caste* every night.

At a large party given by Irving, I remember one of his guests, who kindly offered to be of any service in the matter if he could, telling me that he had read my little story in the Christmas number, and that he could support the truth of it, so far as that he had passed some weeks at the Isle of Wight hotel just after 'Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft,' as they were called through this 'uncanny' resemblance, had left, and was quite under the impression that we had been staying there. To conclude, only recently I was reproached by the celebrated novelist, James Payn, with having ignored his salutations in the King's Road, Brighton, where at the time I had not been for at least a year, as he was amazed to hear. His conviction that he was bowing to me without receiv-

ing a response being confirmed by Mrs. Payn, who was by his side at the time.

What further mischief has been done I cannot say, and it is impossible to foretell the sequel, should there ever be one. How many forms this incident might take! Some day, perhaps, we may hear strange disclosures of other personations; or *we*, perhaps, may be the recipients of legacies or of gifts meant for *them*—who knows!

Although the receipts continued excellent at the resumed run of the *School for Scandal* until the comedy was withdrawn, they never again approached the great average of the first hundred performances. Indeed, so far as my experience goes—excepting of course very special plays which may have attained an extraordinary hold upon the public—the main result of most successful theatrical productions is achieved in about the first hundred nights, and certainly the first fifty audiences are the most delightful to act before, being formed, as a rule, of keen playgoers.

We were now hard at work, immediately upon the forthcoming second revival of *Society*, and the production of W. S. Gilbert's charming two-act play, which I was so fortunate, when we were all at our wits' end for a title, as to christen *Sweethearts;* the *White Willow*, *Doctor Time*, *Thirty Years*, *Spring and Autumn*, being among the many suggested names which my inspiration was thought to beat. But, of course, throughout all this while the *Merchant*

*of Venice* sat by no means lightly on our minds, especially upon mine, which was responsible for the reckless idea. We also were house-hunting, having resolved to go and live in town and be nearer to our work. It was not without a pang that we abandoned our garden with its beautiful trees; or the close proximity to Lord's, where for years I saw all the great M.C.C. matches; but during our frequent rehearsals we found that four journeys to and fro between home and theatre alone took up a great deal of our time. In the autumn, after many a fruitless search, we saw a moderate-sized house—which gave me, what I have always loved, the sight, if not the possession, of trees—in Cavendish Square. We made a bid for it, which was accepted, although, from the state in which we found the place, we knew it would be at least three months before we should be able to occupy it.

It was at this time that our company suffered a great loss in the departure of its oldest and most valued member, John Hare. Wisely enough, for there was ample room for two such theatres as the then Prince of Wales's in friendly rivalry, he had for some time entertained ideas of commencing management on his own account; how wisely, has been proved by the splendid record of his work in that direction.

When the *School for Scandal* was withdrawn, Hare left us, Sir Peter Teazle being the last part he played under our management; but time has not

weakened our remembrance of his valued services, and the great aid he gave to the Robertson comedies —with which his name must always be associated— or, I rejoice to add, altered our friendship. He and I had dressed in the same room together for years—those years being, at least on my part, the happiest of life—for they began when I was twenty-four, and ended when I was thirty-three. I know I can claim to be his oldest theatrical friend, and I don't suppose he was surprised that the little dressing-room knew me no more, for the next night I found a lonely corner somewhere else.

The new programme proved a great hit, and no play of its length, perhaps, ever excited more attention than *Sweethearts*, which was announced as follows:

*On Saturday, November 7th, 1874, will be acted, for the first time,*

SWEETHEARTS:

AN ORIGINAL DRAMATIC CONTRAST, WRITTEN BY W. S. GILBERT.

Act I.—Spring: 1844.

| | |
|---|---|
| HARRY SPREADBROW | MR. COGHLAN. |
| WILCOX | MR. F. GLOVER. |
| JENNY NORTHCOTT | MISS MARIE WILTON. (Mrs. Bancroft.) |

Act II.—Autumn: 1874.

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR HENRY SPREADBROW | MR. COGHLAN. |
| MISS NORTHCOTT | MISS MARIE WILTON. (Mrs. Bancroft.) |
| RUTH | MISS PLOWDEN. |

Many curious and touching letters were addressed to Mrs. Bancroft, impelled by the emotions the play and her acting caused the writers of them; but the

following kind note, addressed to her by a former leader of our profession so distinguished as Mrs. Charles Kean, gave her especial pleasure.

'47, Queensborough Terrace,
Kensington Gardens, W.
*March* 28, 1875.

'DEAR MADAM,

'I have been so long ill that I have seen nothing of what has been going on in the theatrical world; but I had a great desire to see you in *Sweethearts*, and did so on Saturday. Allow me now to thank you much for the enjoyment you afforded me by your charming acting as Jenny Northcott.

'Perhaps it may not be unpleasing to know that a very old actress thought it perfection. Your style is all your own, and touchingly true to nature.

'Again thanking you,

'Believe me,

'Truly yours,

'ELLEN KEAN.'

Another extract from a letter written by an old soldier (Major Paul Swinburne) may be interesting:

'I cannot help writing to tell you how impressed I was with the performance of *Sweethearts* the other night. I have been often disgusted of late with the London stage, but it will be long before I forget the pleasure you afforded me by, perhaps, the most finished piece of acting I have seen for the last ten years. I confess that previous to entering, I parted with my poor half-sovereign with a certain regret;

but had they demanded of me a second payment after the performance, I would have flung it gaily to the box-keeper.

'I apologize for intruding my opinion on you, but, hardened sinner as I am, you made me cry, and I can't help thanking you for the discovery that I am still capable of emotion.'

I remember during the second act, early in the run of the little play, a gentleman who occupied a stall close to the stage being so palpably unable to control his emotion that he attracted the attention of his neighbour—a lady—so markedly, that at last he turned to her and exclaimed quite audibly, 'Yes, ma'am, I *am* crying, and I'm proud of it!'

The cast of *Society* had undergone many changes since we first acted it; the principal characters being played as follows:

Lord Ptarmigant, Mr. Archer; Sidney Daryl, Mr. Coghlan; Mr. John Chodd, sen., Mr. Arthur Wood; Mr. John Chodd, jun., Mr. F. Glover; Tom Stylus, Mr. Bancroft; Olinthus O'Sullivan, Mr. Collette; Lady Ptarmigant, Mrs. Leigh Murray, and Maud Hetherington, Miss Fanny Josephs.

NOTE BY MRS. BANCROFT.

We lost a friend of long standing at this time, in the death of Tom Hood on November 20th, before he was quite forty years of age. I first met him at the house of my brother-in-law, Mr. Fletcher, they having been college chums at Oxford, and it was afterwards, at his own table, that we made

the acquaintance of Mr. Clement Scott, who was then a very young man, known to his intimates and his friends in the War Office as 'Kitten,' and who we little thought in future years would sit in judgment on much of our managerial work, trying, we are glad to say, never to allow his friendship to sway his opinion, for his adverse views on some of our productions are as severe as any that have been written of us.

Clever and kindly Tom Hood, not long before he died, gave me a bound copy of that droll yet sympathetic nursery story, written by his distinguished father the poet and wit, entitled 'The Headlong Career and Woeful Ending of Precocious Piggy.' Tom Hood often told me how, as a little boy, he had enjoyed the comical history, when it was related to him by his father, who had written it especially for the amusement of his children, and who were all, more or less, deeply interested in Piggy's adventures. I have drawn many a laugh and many a tear from the little ones to whom I have read the story, and my copy, a gift from the son, who so cleverly illustrated his father's quaint fancy, is much prized by me. Before presenting me with the book, Tom Hood added a pen-and-ink drawing which represents 'Piggy' in evening dress, with crush hat, gloves, and opera-glasses complete. Piggy looks remarkably funny, and one cannot resist laughing heartily at the cleverness of the sketch. Tom Hood also added the following verse to the illustration :

'"Where are you going to, you little pig?"
"To the New Prince of Wales's, dressed out in full fig."
"In full fig, young pig?
A pig in full fig!
You'll see Marie Wilton, you lucky young pig!"'

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

On Monday, November 23rd, the performance was honoured by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Cesarewitch, now Emperor of Russia, to whom the Prince of Wales presented me; the Grand Duke Alexis, his brother; and Prince Louis of Battenberg. I only mention the circumstance, as I doubt if any little green-room ever received so large a contingent of royalty at the same time.

Now that these plays were so successfully launched, I turned all my thoughts towards the *Merchant of Venice;* the first attempt we made towards special engagements being a proposal to Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, which broke down, when, happily, the thought of Ellen Terry, who then had not acted for a considerable time, came to me, and resulted in her engagement to be the Portia. The following characteristic letter from that delightful actress, whose method so completely conveys the power of 'charm,' will be the best comment on the subject we can offer, and, I am sure, the most acceptable to the reader:

'DEAR MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT,

'I received the form of engagement this morning, together with the kind little letters. Accept my best thanks for your expressions of

good-will towards me. I cannot tell you how pleased I am that I seem to see in you a reflection of my own feelings with regard to this engagement.

'My work will, I feel certain, be *joyful* work, and joyful work *should* turn out *good* work. *You* will be pleased, and *I* shall be pleased at your pleasure, and it would be hard, then, if the good folk "in front" are not pleased.

'Believe me, I am *all ways*,

'Sincerely yours,

'ELLEN TERRY.'

I took upon myself the great responsibility of rearranging the text of the play, so as to avoid change of scene in sight of the audience, and adapt the work, as far as possible, to its miniature frame; being greatly fortified in my researches by the discovery of the following passage, which I came across in an old edition of the play that had been my father's, and which I had often read when a boy, for the *Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* were always my favourites of Shakespeare's plays:

'The old quarto editions of 1600 have no distribution of acts, but proceed from the beginning to the end in an unbroken tenour. This play, therefore, having been probably divided without authority by the publishers of the first folio, lies open to a new regulation, if any more commodious division can be proposed. The story in itself is so wildly incredible,

and the changes of the scene so frequent and capricious, that the probability of action does not deserve much care.—JOHNSON.'

Here was a discovery, indeed, in so eminent an opinion, and I resolved to include the first paragraphs of it in our play-bill. Perhaps there will be no better opportunity to describe the sequence of scenes I eventually decided on, for I often have regretted that I did not print the play as we performed it. The first tableau, under the arches of the Doge's palace, contained the text of the opening and third scenes of Act I., the dialogue being welded together by carefully arranged and appropriate pantomimic action from the crowds, who were throughout passing and re-passing. The second tableau was in Portia's house at Belmont, and opened with the choice of the golden casket by the Prince of Morocco, after which came the dialogues between Portia and Nerissa from Act I., scene 2, and then closed with the announcement of the Prince of Arragon, and his choice of the silver casket. In the third tableau we return to Venice, a most quaint spot of the old city being chosen for the outside of Shylock's house, which, without exception, was the most extraordinary scenic achievement in so small a theatre, the close of the scene being the elopement by moonlight of his daughter. This tableau was then repeated by daylight for the scene of 'the Jew's rage' with Solanio and Salarino, and his subsequent interview with

Tubal. The fourth view was a repetition, with some changed effects; it being the hall of Portia's palace, where Bassanio chose wisely from the three caskets, and heard afterwards of Antonio's arrest. The next tableau was the 'Trial Scene,' and the last 'Portia's Garden.'

The words of two or three songs from some of his other comedies were introduced, but no syllable of Shakespeare's text was altered; transpositions of the dialogue alone being necessary for an arrangement of the play which it may not be too late, even yet, to publish. This arrangement of the incidents of the play was subsequently highly praised by Dutton Cook.

Sketches from Vicellio were made by Mr. Coghlan for some of the dresses, and to him not only the responsibility of acting Shylock but the stage management of the production were intrusted. Mr. E. W. Godwin lent his valuable archæological knowledge, and all possible pains were bestowed upon every branch of the work by all concerned; some charming music was especially composed by Mr. Meredith Ball, the voice portions being rendered by a choir of men and boys specially trained, who, with the soldiers engaged to represent the Prince of Morocco's suite and the Doge's body-guard, to say nothing of the increased company, tried our resources to the utmost with regard to dressing-room accommodation. The views of Venice—comprising the Campanile and

column of St. Mark, the Rialto, and a view of the Grand Canal, to be shown between the acts—were beautiful pictures by George Gordon, who, with Mr. Harford, devoted months of labour to the scenery, which was very realistic; elaborate capitals of enormous weight, absolute reproductions of those which crown the pillars of the colonnade of the Doge's Palace, were cast in plaster, causing part of a wall to be cut away to find room for them to be moved, by means of trucks, on and off the tiny stage. Special engagements, of course, were made in order to complete the long cast of the play. For my own part, I decided upon only adding a minor character to my other labours, as my brain was kept at such a tension that I wanted some relief from it; whether the play was to succeed or fail began to seem as nothing to the longing to be rid of it.

NOTE BY MRS. BANCROFT.

I must here interrupt Mr. Bancroft's narrative to tell a true, and, I hope, amusing incident. While waiting one day in Wellington Street in an open carriage for my husband, who was giving some orders at Madame Auguste's about the dresses, I was startled by a street-nigger coming towards me with a broad grin upon his black face. Concluding that he intended asking for money, I was preparing to give him something, when he stopped me by saying, 'No, no, lady; I don't come a-beggin'! I saw your kind face from the other side of the road, and when you smoiled, I said to myself, "Why, I

know who that is; there ain't another smoile like that *no*wheres. It's Miss Ma-arie Wilton, wot was at the Strand Theayter!"' Seeing a wild stare of amazement on my face, he continued, 'Oh, you don't remember me, miss?' How in the world could I recognise the creature with such a face—all niggers have such a strong family likeness! I wished the ground to open and let me through; my sable friend, however, did not observe my agitation, and proceeded, 'I was in the chorus at the Strand Theayter, miss, when you was theer. Lor, how I used to watch you! I was up to my ears in love with you, miss!' *Such ears!* I wanted to scream! There I was, fixed in the carriage, and this man standing close to it, with one foot on the step. He continued, 'Since then I've tried many things, but failed in *heverythink!* If I had been hedgicated, I might 'ave been in a leadin' persition like 'Enery Irving at the Lyceum, there. But 'ere I am reduced to doin' nigger business in the streets like this 'ere!' I gazed at him with horror. A tall, white hat, with a deep black band; red and white striped trousers, very short; a coat with the tails dragging on the ground; a large white collar, and a tie like a windmill, which every time he moved threatened to knock my bonnet off; a handkerchief, the size of a moderate table-cover hanging from his pocket, and a large flower in his coat like an 'ornament for your fire-stove.' At last strains of 'Ada with the Golden Hair' struck up close by, and with a sigh the nigger said, 'Well,

miss, dooty calls, and I must go.' How thankful I was to dooty! 'My pals is in the next street. If ever I see you agin, I shall only take my 'at off to you, and you won't mind that, I know, from a poor fellar wot is down in the world!' This touched me, and I made him accept some money; the poor fellow then said, 'I 'umbly ask yer pardon, but I couldn't 'elp speakin' jist a word to you, for the sake of times gone by; good luck to you, miss, and God bless you!' This last sentence was spoken with pathos, and tears trickled down his cheeks, putting his face into half-mourning.

A few minutes later, as I was relating this experience to Mr. Bancroft, we encountered a nigger troupe in a street off the Strand, and there was my black dose vigorously playing the bones; he kept his word, but as he raised his hat he fixed his eyes plaintively on me as he sang in chorus with 'his pals':

'I fancy I can see her now,
Down at Farmer Fenn's,
A pickin' up the new-laid eggs from the cow,
And milkin' the cocks and hens.'

RESUMED BY MR. BANCROFT.

Meanwhile, the programme of *Sweethearts* and *Society* had succeeded beyond our hopes; indeed, both pieces might have been acted longer than they were, but on Tuesday, April 13th, we withdrew them, after one hundred and thirty-one performances, and the three following evenings were devoted to night rehearsals of the *Merchant of Venice*. On the last of them we decided, after all

the excitement of it, to walk home, for our new house was but a short distance. As we passed the Middlesex Hospital, I remember the clock told us it was past three; in fact, we had been nine hours in the theatre.

Exquisite as we could see the Portia would be—beautiful, beyond our hopes, as were the scenery and dresses—we felt, alas, that the version of Shylock which Coghlan proposed to offer would fail, at the time, at any rate, to be acceptable; so it may be believed our hearts were heavy when the curtain rose upon the venture.

*On Saturday, April 17th, 1875, will be acted, Shakespeare's Play,*

## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

'The old quarto editions of 1600 have no distribution of acts, but proceed from the beginning to the end in an unbroken tenour. This play, therefore, having been probably divided without authority by the publishers of the first folio, lies open to a new regulation, if any more commodious division can be proposed.'—*Johnson.*

To avoid the changing of scenes in sight of the audience, the text (for the arrangement of which Mr. Bancroft is responsible) will be comprised in seven scenes, painted by Mr. Gordon and Mr. Harford, from drawings expressly made in Venice by Mr. Gordon, who desires to acknowledge his obligation to Mr. E. W. Godwin, F.S.A., for valuable aid in archæological research.

Scene 1.—Under the Arches of the Doge's Palace. Scene 2.—Belmont. Scene 3.—Lanes in Venice: Morning. Scene 4.—Lanes in Venice: Evening. Scene 5.—Belmont. Scene 6.—The Sala Della Bussola. Scene 7.—A Garden. During the intervals between the scenes, views of Venice, painted by Mr. Gordon, will be shown.

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| DUKE OF VENICE | MR. COLLETTE. |
| PRINCE OF MOROCCO | MR. BANCROFT. |
| PRINCE OF ARRAGON | MR. VAUGHAN. |
| ANTONIO | MR. ARCHER. |
| BASSANIO | MR. E. H. BROOKE. (His first appearance. |
| SOLANIO | MR. DENISON. |
| SALARINO | MR. TEESDALE. |
| GRATIANO | MR. LIN RAYNE |
| LORENZO | MR. STANDING |

| | |
|---|---|
| SHYLOCK | Mr. Coghlan. |
| TUBAL | Mr. Newton. |
| OLD GOBBO | Mr. F. Glover. |
| LAUNCELOT GOBBO | Mr. Arthur Wood. |
| LEONARDO | Mr. Robinson. |
| BALTHAZAR | Mr. Franks. |
| GRAND CAPTAIN | Mr. Stewart. |
| CRIER | Mr. Noel. |
| GAOLER | Mr. Bella. |
| PORTIA | Miss Ellen Terry. (Her first appearance.) |
| NERISSA | Miss Carlotta Addison. |
| JESSICA | Miss Augusta Wilton. |

*The incidental music composed by Mr. J. Meredith Ball.*

Of course, there was a brilliant audience, and the play throughout was well received, but never with enthusiasm. I think surprise had much to do with this; it all looked so unlike a theatre, and so much more like old Italian pictures than anything that had been previously shown upon the stage. Some of the dresses seemed to puzzle many among the audience, notably those worn by Bassanio and the Venetian nobles, who accompanied him to Belmont in their velvet robes of state; the gorgeous attendants on the Prince of Morocco; and the Spaniards who accompanied the Prince of Arragon.

It may be that it all came a little before the proper time, and that we saw things too far in advance; for the play, in our own opinions, only just missed being a great success. For my part, I account it a failure to be proud of; nor should it be forgotten that the absence of Mrs. Bancroft was another serious drawback to its attraction, for Miss Terry had still, in those days, to earn the brilliant position

she now owns, and of which her acting in this production was, without doubt, the foundation-stone. As I, and I alone, was responsible for the mistake, if, in truth, it was a mistake, in casting Mr. Coghlan for the part of Shylock (misled by his splendid acting in *Man and Wife*, and a play by the late regretted Sir Charles Young, called *Shadows*), I held it to be but right to stand by him, and so turned a deaf ear to the suggestions that poured in on every side as to what we ought to do, and was dumb to the remarkable applications from decayed tragedians—the names even of many of them being unknown to me before—who vowed that if the part were but given over to them the fortune of the production would still be assured.

Perhaps there is no character more trying than Shylock for an actor to excel in, especially in the scene where he upbraids Solanio and Salarino, and in the tremendous interview that follows between Tubal and himself. The fact of rushing on the stage in a white-heat frenzy, with nothing to lead up to its passion, I take it, is the main difficulty. Of all the Shylocks I have seen, Charles Kean did most with this particular scene, and his performance, I have been told, was, as far as he could make it so, a reproduction of his father's. Apropos of which, Mr. Wilton often spoke to me; he having once, when quite a young actor, played Tubal to the Shylock of Edmund Kean. The great actor did not appear at rehearsal, but sent word that 'he should like to see the gentle-

man who was to be the Tubal at his hotel.' Mr. Wilton obeyed the summons, and spoke always of the kindness with which Kean instructed him, after saying, 'We'll run through the scene, Mr. Wilton, because I'm told that if you don't know what I'm going to do I might frighten you!' Mr. Wilton described the performance as *stupendous!* and said that, although prepared beforehand, at night Kean really frightened him.

Macready writes of the difficulties of the part, and of his dissatisfaction with all his attempts to act it. It is said of him, and I believe with greater truth than attaches itself to all theatrical anecdotes, that he never went on the stage for the scene in question without hanging on to the rungs of a ladder, and trying to lash himself into the required condition by snarling and cursing at some imaginary foe.

Mr. Coghlan was, in those days, but a young man, and his many brilliant successes under our management far more than excused this solitary instance, among the varied claims we made upon his great ability, in which he failed to reach our expectations; while my error, after all, was not much greater than in asking a tenor to sing a bass song. Had I been less ambitious, and had chosen either *As You Like It* or *Much Ado about Nothing*, I think success would have rewarded the attempt. With what charm Ellen Terry plays Beatrice all the world now knows, and how beautiful she would have been as Rosalind, all the world may guess; while Coghlan, either as

Benedick or as Orlando, would have been a perfect companion picture. We missed, therefore, an opportunity by my first choice of a Shakespearian play being unfortunate.

Apropos of the wonderful power of 'charm' possessed in so eminent a degree by Miss Terry, when, some few years later, she was playing at the Lyceum the part of Camma in Lord Tennyson's play, *The Cup*, I heard an able dramatic critic, who was going to see it for the second time, asked by a friend if he 'really thought the actress had all the power and physical strength to play the second act as perfectly as she did the first.' 'Not for a moment,' was the reply. 'But I would rather see Ellen Terry *try* to realize it, than see any other actress who plays such parts succeed in doing so.'

The signature of the accomplished writer of the following letter would alone justify its insertion here, without the few appropriate lines it contains:

'68, Thistle Grove, Brompton,
*Friday, April* 23, 1875.

'Please, Mrs. Bancroft, may we come to see the *Merchant of Venice?* I only returned from the "Rialto" last Tuesday, and I am very anxious to behold the much-talked-of *mise-en-scène* at the Prince of Wales's. It may comfort Mr. Coghlan to know that I bought $2\frac{1}{2}$ yards of *smaniglio*, or Venice gold chain, from Shylock himself, and that he was the quietest and most gentlemanly Jew I ever met, but a desperate "do."

'If you can spare seats for Monday next, you will delight Mrs. Sala, and inspire gratitude in the heart of your most faithful servant,

'GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.'

Meanwhile our poor *Merchant* was in a very bankrupt condition, hardly paying his nightly expenses. After three weeks of this state of things, we decided upon putting Lord Lytton's comedy *Money* in rehearsal, with a very powerful addition to the distribution of the characters—Mrs. Bancroft deciding to play Lady Franklin for the first time, while Ellen Terry was to be the Clara Douglas; George Honey was re-engaged for his old part, Mr. Graves, and Coghlan would resume his admirable performance of the hero. Directly this was settled, I advertised in the newspapers that 'the performance of the *Merchant of Venice* having failed to attract large audiences, the play would be withdrawn,' which seemed to me a better course than a ridiculous evasion, such as, 'owing to prior arrangements,' etc., etc. I remember that I obtained great approval for my boldness, and our successes were, as a result, believed in. Strange as it may seem, directly after the announcement appeared, the audiences improved almost nightly—the many beauties of the production having, I suppose, begun to be talked about—and for the last few performances the theatre was quite three-parts full. We received a very influentially-signed petition, begging us to act the *Merchant of Venice* a

little longer, in the hope that our reward must surely come. Whether this production might have grown to be one of the few plays that outlived failure and eventually reached success, it is now impossible to say; for we stood by our advertisement, and withdrew it, after only thirty-six representations.

It is a great pleasure to record that during its brief career the play was seen by many actors, who were all enraptured with it—many of them saw the performance again and again.

I hope I have not wearied the reader with so long an account of this ill-fated revival, which was not, however, without its influence on much future work, and so served some good end; but as I have so often had to tell of our successes, I ought to speak as frankly of our failures, and before finally dismissing the subject, I may say that the result of the run, when the receipts were averaged, was just to pay its way, leaving us minus the cost of the production, some three thousand pounds—a large sum to spend upon a play in such a little theatre.

Let me turn aside, if but for a page or two, from our own doings to tell of two performances, each of moment in their different ways, which occurred in the spring of this year—the *première* of *Our Boys*, and the appearance of the great Italian actor, Salvini, in London.

Apropos of the first event, I was one Saturday night in the billiard-room of the Garrick Club, where I recollect a group of men coming in, who said they

had been to see the new play at the Vaudeville. All sorts of opinions were expressed, several present thinking the comedy would only have quite a moderate run, when Charles Mathews, who was playing pool, said quietly, 'I don't agree with you fellows. I was there, and haven't laughed so heartily for a long while. Byron this time—he doesn't always—has taken his goods to exactly the right shop. That play is sure to run.'

A few words on Salvini's magnificent acting as Othello: which we first saw at a morning performance given at Drury Lane Theatre, when all the then representative actors were invited and almost entirely made up the vast assemblage. Salvini was only courteously received on his first entrance, but very quickly impressed the remarkable audience that no ordinary actor was before them. No ovation that we have ever taken part in equalled in enthusiasm his reception at the close of the third act; while his acting that day lives in our memory as the grandest and completest tragic effort that we ever saw. We have at least to thank the *Merchant of Venice* for frequent opportunities of seeing Salvini act, as Mrs. Bancroft was not concerned in it, and my small part ended quite early. We saw him often as Othello, once as the Gladiator, also as Hamlet—a performance, although the actor's physique and southern nature (as in the most modest way he asserted to me) were opposed to the part, full of exquisite beauties. To describe the wondrously touching acting of his death,

let me drop my own feeble pen and take up one that was wielded then by G. H. Lewes, who wrote: 'No more pathetic death has been seen on the stage. Among its many fine touches there was the subtle invention of making the dying Hamlet draw down the head of Horatio to kiss him before sinking into silence, which reminds one of the "Kiss me, Hardy" of the dying Nelson; and this affecting motive was represented by an action as novel as it was truthful, namely, the uncertain hand blindly searching for the dear head, and then faintly closing on it with a sort of final adieu.' We had the pleasure to make Salvini's acquaintance, and still retain his valued friendship. The ability of the actor is only equalled by the modesty of the man.

We are glad to be able to print a letter from the great artist:

'*Juin* 9, 1875.

'CHÈRE MADAME,

'Que vous êtes aimable!

'Je tiendrai votre joli cadeau comme un doux souvenir de votre sincère amitié. Ce sera un précieux talisman qui suivra le reste de ma carrière artistique, et qui, je suis sûr, m'apportera du bonheur.

'J'aurai le plaisir d'entendre la nouvelle pièce que vous allez représenter Lundi prochain, et j'accepterai la loge que vous avez eu l'aimabilité de me proposer.

'Acceptez de nouveau mes remerciements, et croyez-moi,

'Votre dévoué,

'TOMMASO SALVINI.'

Although it was so short a time since *Money* had been played, the change in the theatre was magical, and all our friends at once came back in crowds. This was our cast of the well-known characters on May 29th: Lord Glossmore, Mr. Teesdale; Sir John Vesey, Mr. Charles Collette; Sir Frederick Blount, Mr. Bancroft; Captain Dudley Smooth, Mr. Archer; Mr. Graves, Mr. George Honey; Alfred Evelyn, Mr. Coghlan; Mr. Stout, Mr. Arthur Wood; Mr. Sharp, Mr. Denison; An Old Member of the Club, Mr. F. Glover; Lady Franklin, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft); Georgina Vesey, Miss Carlotta Addison; and Clara Douglas, Miss Ellen Terry.

On Saturday, June 19th, we gave a morning performance to a crowded house of the smallest programme ever, I should say, issued in an important theatre, when Theyre Smith's charming little play, *A Happy Pair*, and W. S. Gilbert's *Sweethearts*, were acted; the performance lasted about an hour and three-quarters, six people only appearing on the stage. The cast of *A Happy Pair* was Mr. Honeyton, Mr. Bancroft; Mrs. Honeyton, Miss Ellen Terry. It was simply for this one occasion that we played it; but I remember now the laughter and applause it caused. The chief reason for the performance was to give poor Sothern, of whom at this time we saw a good deal, an opportunity he much coveted of seeing Mrs. Bancroft in *Sweethearts*. *Money* drew sixty brilliant houses, and ran until

August 6th, the usual time we closed our season, a result partly, doubtless, due to a cold and rainy July. Although we had arranged with Charles Reade to revive *Masks and Faces*, the clever drama written by himself and Tom Taylor, in which we placed great faith, we decided to spare ourselves further strain of rehearsals until the autumn; so resolved, in spite of a fear that it would be exhausted for a time, to begin again with Lord Lytton's comedy until *Peg Woffington* should be ready to replace it.

HOLIDAY NOTES BY MRS. BANCROFT.

After this arduous season (for although the one failure had been far more than compensated for by the successes, still it left its wound), we were glad to get away and seek again lazy relief from work at Zurich and the Kaltbad, where we became acquainted with a charming old maiden lady, a sister of the late Dean Stanley. This time we travelled with a large and cumbersome joint-stock portmanteau, which we eventually christened the 'Eilgut,' for the reason that it was constantly being lost for three or four days together, and after telegrams had been sent in every direction to trace its whereabouts, and my anxiety had reached the highest pitch, I was informed that it was coming by the 'Eilgut,' a sort of *petite vitesse*, and very slow method of progression. I lost this wretched box so often that I determined to use it no more. (Ultimately it was degraded to an appearance in *Diplomacy*, in which play it was carried

across the stage as Dora and Julian Beauclerc are about to start for their honeymoon. I don't know where it is now, and I don't care!) To return, I was constantly finding, on my arrival at various hotels, that this unfortunate and troublesome trunk was missing. On reaching Lucerne this year we discovered that our miserable box was again lost; what to do I could not imagine. We proceeded to the Kaltbad with nothing but our travelling-bags, and days passed without news of the trunk. Several ladies, whom I knew, helped me, and I was positively dressed for nearly a week by subscription. I was sitting in my room one day completely heart-broken, and arranging to return to England as soon as possible, when I heard in the corridor an unusual commotion, and presently a chorus of voices to the tune of 'See the Conquering Hero Comes.' I opened my room door and there saw a procession, headed by my old friend Mr. Palgrave Simpson, who carried an Alpine stock, like a master of the ceremonies, followed by the wretched 'Eilgut,' elaborately decorated, and borne in triumph by two porters. After marching twice up and down the corridor, the cause of such frequent discomfort was deposited in my room, and there and then I vowed that never again would I bring the 'Eilgut' abroad, and I kept my word.

The loss of my box and the want of clothes did not finish my list of annoyances during my stay this year at the Kaltbad, as I was robbed of my sleep

by an unpleasant next-door neighbour who snored terribly. The noise he made sounded more like the growl of some animal than the breathing of a human being. I watched for my persecutor day after day, but could never find him. I looked at every man I saw on the terrace, who seemed likely to be a snorer, with suspicion; but more than this I could never do. I found out his name in the bureau—he was a German—but from the description I received there, failed to identify him. I felt sure he was a big man, for only a big man could produce *such* a snore. During the day my *bête noir* would be out on some excursion, at *table d'hôte* I used to search with my eyes all round the room, but always failed to fix my accusation definitely on anyone. I hoped for every day to be his last in the hotel, but at night I found he still remained. If I hurried to bed early in order to get an hour or two's rest before he retired, it so happened that on those very nights he had returned from some expedition and had gone to bed early also. When he was tired the noise was louder and deeper, so I could always tell when his day had been fatiguing, for the sound was like the snore of a tired bull. It became so terrible at last that I decided upon leaving; for the hotel was too crowded for me to change my room, and I was literally ill for want of sleep, so we determined to go down by the little mountain railway to Vitznau, to catch the steamer for Lucerne, and there secure rooms for a few days. We took our seats in the train, each carriage of

which is open, and simply divided into benches, and after we had started, I was on the point of dropping off to sleep (completely worn out for want of rest), when suddenly my eyes caught the number of the hated room my cruel tormentor occupied, marked in plain chalk figures on the soles of a pair of boots. There he was, with his ugly feet up—two benches off—on the opposite side, reading a newspaper, which completely hid the upper part of him. I eagerly watched him, and when at last he dropped his paper and the face was revealed, behold, instead of the big, burly creature I expected, he was quite a little, undersized bit of humanity! 'Who from such a stem would look for such a'—snore? I was consoled when I found the porter had chalked his ugly shoes for the last time, and we learnt that he had taken his departure from the hotel.

Before returning to our mountain home, we went on to Lucerne for the day, and on board the steamer met the Duke of Connaught, whom I at first did not recognise in his suit of dittos and pot hat. His Royal Highness was pleased to enter into conversation with us, during which he noticed that several people on board were staring at me, and whispering to each other. The Duke was much amused, and laughingly remarked, 'You see, Mrs. Bancroft, I have the advantage of you here; they all know you, but they don't know me.' I was much struck to see the Duke, who was accompanied by Sir Howard

Elphinstone and another gentleman, on their arrival at Lucerne, walk to the hotel carrying their own hand-baggage and rugs.

After our return to the Kaltbad, we were standing one day on the terrace enjoying the beautiful view—the atmosphere being exceptionally clear, while the sun glittered as he well knows how in those high regions. Our attention was suddenly attracted by a hurried rush and bustle on the part of the waiters and maids, who were running about in all directions, hastily shutting and securing the *jalousies* of the hotel windows. On inquiry, we were answered by the *portier*, 'L'orage! l'orage!' and, sure enough, on looking in the direction he pointed towards, we saw a strange sight: a huge, black cloud was turning the corner of the opposite mountain like an angry war-horse, and from its nostrils came streaks of fire. It was followed by another and another; they seemed to glide so rapidly in frenzied pursuit, that one stood wondering what they were flying from. This was 'Monsieur l'Orage,' whose advent was always known by the furious *avant coureur* I have described. It was the most awful storm I ever witnessed even in the mountains, where sunshine and tempest are so often mingled. It was, indeed, a sudden change from gay to grave. The wind howled as if all the wild animals in the world had been lashed into a fury, and, maddened with rage, were going to devastate the earth. The thunder was terrible, and filled one with a religious awe, as if it meant the end of all

things. The lightning came like knives cutting the clouds, with which it was at war, into shreds; then the hailstones, which were as large as filberts, fell with such force that they seemed to split the air as they descended. It was a terrible but grand experience. Presently a change, as sudden as the storm, restored to us the giant sun, and all was calm and beautiful again. In the evening we were discussing this event, when we were told a sad story of what had happened on the lake below us. A young Frenchman and his bride, who were passing part of their honeymoon at Lucerne, had engaged a boat for a sort of love-cruise, and although the boatman warned them of the danger of going alone, as a storm was brewing, the lover-husband declined his services. Not long afterwards the anticipated storm broke out, and as the tiny boat with its happy load was about to turn a corner of the lake, the sudden squall capsized it. The husband was saved, but his bride, who but a few moments before was so joyous, so contented with her fate, was drowned. The sympathy for the poor stricken bridegroom was universal; for a time he lost his reason, and could not be convinced that his young wife was dead. It was, indeed, a sad ending to so much happiness, and the story cast a gloom upon the place for a long time. As the ill-starred girl lay in her last sleep, one felt the words of Queen Gertrude:

> 'I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
> And not have strew'd thy grave.'

Apropos of these sudden changes in the weather on the Lake of Lucerne, there is an old well-known rhyme about its chief mountainous feature, the rugged Pilatus, which is made to act as a sort of local barometer. The lines run as follows:

'If Pilatus wears his cap, serene will be the day;
If his collar he puts on, you may venture on your way.
But if his sword he wields, at home you'd better stay.'

The doggerel reminds me of a version of the prophecy given by a little German boy, who was learning English, and mixed up the two languages thus:

'Wen Pilatus hat sein hut,
Den de wedder's very gut;
Wen Pilatus hat sein degen,
Den you know it's going to regen;
Wen Pilatus hat sein schwerz,
Den de wedder's werse and werse.'

We then went on to Mürren with Palgrave Simpson and another friend; our drive over the Brunig Pass being enlivened by a wheel of the carriage catching fire, and a consequent midnight arrival at Interlaken. This catastrophe happened on the most secluded part of the road; we were obliged to turn out, luggage and all, and wait until a vehicle was sent from the nearest village, Lungen, where our carriage was to be repaired. The heat was intense, and it must have been a funny sight to see us sitting on the road-side perfectly helpless, with our luggage dotted about. A long open cart was brought at last; and, as Palgrave remarked, we looked for

all the world like a travelling troupe of circus or other exhibitors, and only wanted a drum and a few flags to complete the picture. Palgrave added, Lud-a-mussy! don't laugh, they'll think I'm the clown.'

At Mürren were the late Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Tait, with whom we had several pleasant chats. We thought we would make a change in the close of our holiday this year, and resolved to pass it at Ostend, where we had the great pleasure of being in the same hotel with an old and dear friend—the late Mr. Critchett—whose opportune arrival and surgical skill saved Mr. Bancroft from what might have been a serious illness, as Mr. Critchett found him suffering from creeping erysipelas, caused by a bite on the face by some diseased insect. When this trouble passed, we had a delightful time, during which, on the beautiful stretch of sands that lie out past the Marine Villa of the King of the Belgians, we began to study Triplet and Peg Woffington.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SEASON OF 1875-76.

INCLEMENT as the summer had been, so was the autumn which followed it magnificent; we returned home, in fact, to find weather that made one sigh to think our holiday had come to an end. The heat was even greater than we had found abroad, and the baked pavement of the still deserted streets seemed to reproach one for the stupidity of coming back so soon to the monotonous repetition of a well-worn play; and small blame to it that *Money*, when we recommenced our season on Saturday, September 18th, declined to draw more than moderate houses for the few weeks we should be obliged to act it, while *Masks and Faces* was prepared.

It was not an easy task to persuade Charles Reade (to whom the comedy belonged, he having some years before bought Tom Taylor's share from him, and with whom all our negotiation took place) to give his consent to the changes we sought to make in the play. At length, however, after many a tough fight, we won the day and gained our wish, after-

wards having the great satisfaction of Charles Reade's approval of every change; and when the play reverted to him, he discarded the old book for ever, and ordered *replicas* of our prompt copy for his future use.

There have been so many and such varying statements made concerning these alterations of *Masks and Faces*, that perhaps the outline of facts we will give upon the subject may still have interest, especially to those connected with the two distinguished authors, who might be fairly called the Beaumont and Fletcher of this century.

First it was advisable, in our opinion, that the play should be in three instead of in two acts as hitherto, and an opening scene was suggested by ourselves to aid this view, Mrs. Bancroft drawing up a rough sketch of an interview between Quin and Kitty Clive, to end in a quarrel over their criticisms. This notion Reade at once agreed to, and in his large-hearted way proposed that Tom Taylor should be asked to write the dialogue, that he might have the fee we proposed to give for the work, as it would be to him a little consolation for no longer sharing in the nightly royalties. Taylor agreed, wrote the scene admirably, and gracefully acknowledged our cheque for fifty pounds, which he was good enough to think a far larger sum than his work entitled him to accept. Some changes at the end of Act I. were made by Reade. The dialogue of the scene at Ernest Vane's house remained virtually the same so

far as mere words went, although distinctly, here and there, it was better hooked-and-eyed together; a few speeches and lines, having no pretence in a literary sense, but of great value in the acting, were now and again added by Reade at our suggestion throughout the work; but it was the *treatment* of the play we chiefly ventured to alter, not the play itself.

Our great fight was over the end of it; and only after many struggles with Charles Reade did he allow us to cut out the old stagey, rhyming tag, and agree to the pathetic ending we proposed. We conquered him at last by acting to him what we wished to do, when Peg, just before we wanted the curtain to fall, tearfully accepted the tenderly though modestly offered sympathy of the grateful Triplet, and dropped her head upon his breast. Reade cried like a child, and said to her, 'You're right, my dear; you're a woman, and of course you're right; you shall have it your own way.' In a letter written afterwards he says, 'Dear Peg, you are too much for me; and after this I don't measure my wit against yours for a month or two. I cave in, as the Yankees say, and submit at once to your proposal.'

We had many a talk together about the play with Charles Reade, as to which was his share, and which was Tom Taylor's; he frankly told us the whole story of its growth and completion, always regarding the work as fairly divided between them. The conception of the play, which arose from his looking for

a long time one day at Hogarth's portrait of Peg Woffington in the Garrick Club, and its most beautiful scene, were certainly Reade's; but Taylor was responsible for a delightful part of the second act, and undoubtedly put many of Reade's early ideas into more workmanlike shape.

Very diligent rehearsals attended this production, and we did not feel it ready to face the heat of criticism until November. On Friday, 5th, *Money* was withdrawn, and the following night we acted the revised version of Reade and Taylor's play for the first time.

## MASKS AND FACES.

*An original Comedy written by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor.*

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR CHARLES POMANDER | Mr. Coghlan. |
| ERNEST VANE | Mr. Archer. |
| COLLEY CIBBER | Mr. Arthur Wood. |
| JAMES QUIN | Mr. Teesdale. |
| TRIPLET | Mr. Bancroft. |
| MR. SNARL | Mr. F. Dewar. |
| MR. SOAPER | Mr. F. Glover. |
| LYSIMACHUS | Master Glover. |
| JAMES BURDOCK | Mr. Stewart. |
| COLANDER | Mr. Denison. |
| HUNDSDON | Mr. Newton. |
| PEG WOFFINGTON | Miss Marie Wilton. (Mrs. Bancroft.) |
| MABEL VANE | Miss Ellen Terry. |
| KITTY CLIVE | Miss Brennan. |
| MRS. TRIPLET | Miss Lee. |
| ROXALANA | Miss Glover. |

Act I.—The Green Room of Old Covent Garden Theatre. Act II.—No. 51, Queen Square. Act III.—Triplet's Home.

[I (S. B. B.) may here say it was not without much fear and trembling that I resolved to play the

part of Triplet. I felt, however, unless I made some effort equally bold, that I should be doomed to the inanition of ringing the changes on what had now for some time grown to be called 'Bancroft parts.' Happily, through hard work and patient thought, my ambition met with some reward. During the run of the play, I remember attending a meeting of a theatrical character, held at the Mansion House. Its object has escaped my recollection; but what lives in my memory is encountering Benjamin Webster there. The old actor, after looking long and earnestly at me for some time, said pleasant, graceful things of his own old part to the younger Triplet.]

Success of the highest kind rewarded our work, and it has throughout been our impression that *Masks and Faces* has, in all ways, been one of our truest friends. Permission was obtained from the Committee of the Garrick Club to have copies made of some pictures of the time from its celebrated collection, and so we adorned the walls of the first act, which represented the green-room of Old Covent Garden Theatre, with reproductions of Grisson's portrait of Colley Cibber as Lord Foppington; the well-known picture of Garrick as Richard III.; Vandergucht's portrait of Woodward as Petruchio; and Zoffany's Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard in *Macbeth*, dressed in court clothes of the period.

The beautiful tapestry chamber which formed

the scene of the second act was, perhaps, with a group of characters on the stage, one of the most real pictures of those times ever shown in a theatre.

Charles Reade, although very critical, was very pleased. On reaching home after the first performance he wrote the following lines, and sent with them in the morning an autograph letter of Margaret Woffington's.

'Presented by Charles Reade to his friend Mrs. Bancroft upon her admirable personation of Peg Woffington in *Masks and Faces.*

'C. R.

'*Nov.* 6, 1875.'

The autograph letter is so quaint and so characteristic of the last century, that it merits reproduction here:

'My pretty little Oroonoko,

'I'm glad to hear of y^r^ safe arrival in Sussex & that you are so well placed, in the Noble family of Richm^d^ &c., for w^ch^ I have y^e^ most profound regard and respect.

'Sir Thomas Robinson writes me word y^t^ you are very pretty which has raised my curiosity to a great pitch & it makes me long to see you.

'I hear the acting poetaster is w^th^ you still, at Goodwood, and has had the insolence to brag of favours from me; Vain Coxcomb!

'I did, indeed, by the persuasion of Mr. Swiny

and his assistance answer the simpleton's nauseous lett$^{r}$—foh!

'He did well, truly, to throw my lett$^{r}$ into the fire otherwise it must have made him appear more ridiculous than his amour at Bath did, or his Cudgel playing with y$^{e}$ rough Irish Man. Saucy Jackanapes! to give it for a reason for the burning my letter, that there were expressions too tender & passionate in it to be shown.

'I did in an ironical way (which the booby took in a litteral sense) complim$^{t}$ both myself & him, on the successe we shared mutually, on his first appearance, on y$^{e}$ Stage.

'And that which he had (all to himselfe) in the part of Carlos in *Love Makes a Man;* when with an undaunted Modesty he withstood the attack of his foes, armd with Catt-calls & other Offensive Weapons.

'I did, indeed, give him a little double-meaning touch, on the expressive and gracefull motion of his hands & arms, as assistants to his energick way of delivering y$^{e}$ poets Sentim$^{ts}$, &, w$^{ch}$ he must have learned from y$^{e}$ Youthfull manner of spreading plaisters, when he was a prentice.

'These, these I say, were the true motives to his burning the lett$^{r}$ & no passionate expressions of mine.

'I play the part of S$^{r}$ Harry Wildair to night, & can't recollect w$^{t}$ I said to the impertinent monster, in my lett$^{r}$, nor have I time to say any more now, but y$^{t}$ you shall hear from me by the next post & if

Mr. Swiny has a copy of it, or I can recover the chief articles in it, you shall have em.

'I am (my D^r^ Black boy)
'with my duty to their Graces,
'Y^r^ admirer & humble Serv^t^
'MARGARET WOFFINGTON.

'Saturday, *X^br^.* 18*th*, 1743.

'For Mast^r^ Thomas Robinson at Goodwood in Sussex.'

Let us follow this letter of the real woman with one from her stage representative, which may have the interest of explaining a new view of the character of Woffington as she appears in the play.

MRS. BANCROFT ON PEG WOFFINGTON.

You ask me to explain to you why I played Peg Woffington so differently from previous readings of the part, giving another version almost of her character, and making her appear as a different woman from what the authors seemingly intended her to be, and as she had been represented by other distinguished actresses. All great parts are capable of various conceptions, and it is often a thankless office to play a character which has been originally created by some one else, especially by an actress of position, and I felt this difficulty very keenly when I agreed to accept the part of Peg. With the public I felt safe, for some years had elapsed since *Masks and Faces* had been seen by them, and a new generation had, in the meantime, sprung up.

But many of the critics remembered the great original, Mrs. Stirling ; and when Charles Reade first spoke to me on the subject, I urged that the task would be a hard one for me, and I was frightened at the thought of it. There was, as far as I could see, but one way for me out of the difficulty, to treat the part in a distinctly new way ; so I set to work and read the book carefully to find if it was possible to clothe Peg in a new dress. I had never seen the piece played, although I have a faint remembrance of its being acted somewhere in the country. Well, I first of all read the play through two or three times, as is my custom, to make myself perfectly acquainted with its argument. I then gave my whole attention to the character of Margaret Woffington, as she is depicted in the play ; I pulled the part to pieces and put it together again according to my own lights and fancies. I felt a pleasure in doing this, and I will tell you why and how. While I am studying a part I never lose sight of it. I get between the lines and round about their meaning by reading them again and again until I am able to understand perfectly their purpose, which I know is the only way to arrive at that undercurrent of feeling which should travel from actor to audience. I study every emotion that the character is capable of, and then decide upon the rendering which touches me most and is best suited to my method and style. At last I absolutely live in the part, and associate myself so closely with it, that by the time I step on to the

stage to play it, I am for the time, as it were, in thought and feeling, the person I represent.

When I read Peg Woffington I was deeply impressed by the beauty of the words she had to speak in her serious scenes. I soon felt that one who could utter such sentiments and make so great a sacrifice must be more than an ordinary woman, and possessing a nature far above her surroundings, capable of good deeds and noble inspirations. Her words in the first scene addressed to the man she loves, and to whom she confides her innermost thoughts, telling him how weary to her is the emptiness of her life, point to a superior mind. She wants to be a good woman, and asks him to help her. He teaches her to trust him, and promises all that she asks, and she is happy.

Here is an extract from the scene :

'I can only love my superior. Be frank and honest as the day, and you will be my superior, and I shall love you and bless the hour you shone on my artificial life. It is no easy task : to be my friend is to respect me that I may respect myself the more ; to be my friend is to come between me and the temptations of an unprotected life—the recklessness of a vacant heart.'

She believes implicitly in this man, and bids him fill up the vacant place in her heart, thinking him worthy and honest. But when she discovers that he has betrayed, deceived, insulted her by present-

ing himself to her as an unmarried man, when all the time he had a young wife, her love now gives room for all the bitterness of injured pride, hatred, and revenge—revenge against him, and her, and all the world!

'He shall rue the hour he trifled with a heart and brain like mine.

'TRIPLET: But, his poor wife!

'PEG: His wife! Are wives' hearts the only hearts that feel, and throb, and—break? Let his wife look to herself. It is not from me that mercy can come to her.'

Then, in the scene when, full of venom, she overhears a conversation between the young wife and poor old Triplet, the only friend who clings to Peg, the gentle sweetness and innocence of Mabel so affect her that her revenge and anger disappear, leaving the beauty of her nature to prompt her to make the greatest sacrifice in her power.

Here is a fragment of the scene between the two women:

'PEG: Such as you are the diamonds of the world! Angel of truth and goodness, you have conquered. The poor heart which we both overrate shall be yours again. In my hands 'tis but painted glass at best, but set in the lustre of your love, it may become a priceless jewel. Will you trust me?

'MABEL: With my life!'

Surely a woman who can utter such words must be by nature good and capable of fine emotions. She is sensitive, lovable, trusting and charitable, passionate, headstrong and impulsive, ready to act upon a revengeful impulse, however she might regret it afterwards; she pines for honest friendship and finds it not, and in the last act one can see how her nature is warped and nearly spoiled. Read her farewell speech to Mabel, so simple, true, and pathetic:

'MABEL: In what way can I ever thank you?

'PEG: When hereafter, in your home of peace, you hear harsh sentence passed on us, whose lot is admiration—rarely love, triumph, but never tranquillity—think sometimes of Margaret Woffington, and say stage-masks may cover honest faces, and hearts beat true beneath a tinselled robe.'

Well, as the play was originally acted, after this touching farewell she goes off into laughter, and ends the play with a rhymed comic tag. Now, does not the idea of this jar upon your senses, after all the beautiful sentiments which she has expressed throughout the play? I could not have given any effect to the original end, because I could not feel it; it seemed unnatural; it was against my theory of Peg as I read her, and if Charles Reade had not allowed me to alter the end of the play I could not have acted the part. It was some time before I could bring him round to my way of thinking, so I

illustrated my meaning by acting the last scene to him as I wished it to be done. I explained to him that, after his exquisitely-written farewell to Mabel, having restored the husband to the wife, with her own heart breaking all the while, she could not at once burst into comedy—for, although she despised the husband for his deception and treachery, she could not root out in a moment from her breast the love she has felt for him.

The change which I suggested was this: After Peg's farewell to Mabel, and while kissing her, her eyes meet Ernest's; she stands gazing at him, as if to realize the fact that he could have been capable of so much cruelty. Pale with emotion, she hands Mabel to him and watches them as they are going through the doorway, casting a last lingering look upon him. At that beautiful moment of her anguish, crushed and broken, I am convinced that she should be left to commune with her thoughts, with no one by her side but her one tried old friend Triplet, upon whose breast she leans, and at last gives way to the tears which have up to now been denied her. The curtain should fall upon these two figures, leaving Peg in the hearts of her audience, who have followed her in her sorrows, and must, therefore, pity her. While deeply sympathizing with the wife, they must love Peg for her noble conduct, and weep with her in her suffering.

During my rehearsal in the drawing-room, Charles Reade was silent; and at the end, when I looked at

him for his opinion, I found that he was crying. He rose from his chair, took my hands in his, and said, 'You are right, you have made me cry; your instincts are right; it shall be so.' I acted it in this way, and the play has ever since been a great favourite with the public.

I now add, by way of postscript to these remarks, a few words I wrote with reference to the reality of emotion on the stage, which appeared in *Longman's Magazine*:

'The performance of a moving situation, without the true ring of sensibility in the actor, must fail to affect anyone. An emotional break in the voice must be brought about naturally, and by a true appreciation of the sentiment, or what does it become? I can only compare it to a bell with a wooden tongue—it makes a sound, but there it ends. I cannot simulate suffering without an honest sympathy with it. I hold that without great nervous sensibility no one can act pathos. It is a casket with the jewel absent. The voice in emotion must be prompted by the heart; and if that is "out of tune and harsh," why then, indeed, the voice is "like sweet bells jangled." I was once much impressed by a small child's criticism. He watched for a long time, silently and attentively, a scene of great emotional interest between two people. When asked what he thought of it, he answered, "I like that one best." "Why?" "She speaks like telling the truth,

and the other speaks like telling lies." What criticism can be finer than this? One was acting straight from the heart, the other from not even next door but one to it.'

BY S. B. B.

Under date November 15th we received a long and interesting letter of criticism from Charles Reade, on the acting of his play, which was written after three visits to the theatre, and occupied thirteen pages of letter-paper. The reader need not be alarmed: he shall only have certain extracts from them to read.

Of our own acting as Triplet and Peg Woffington the distinguished writer was so generous as to say:

'I really can see in these two performances no fault. There are a few lines, here and there, read somewhat differently from what I read them, but then they are read naturally and effectively; I ask no more, I don't want machines to act my plays. I repeat, I can see a wealth of thought, care, labour, and talent in these performances; and I can see nothing *wrong*. I shall by-and-by propose a single variation, but I have no correction to offer; and in particular I disown with contempt the shallow suggestion of those critics who would have Peg Woffington in Act II. shake off her blow entirely, and make those introductions with a comic gusto, forgetting alike that she is acting the woman of quality and that she is not herself as happy as a lark. No; give me the actor who considers not each line only, but

the dominant sentiment of the entire scene, and deals with the lines accordingly.

* * * * *

'. . . . . going off through taking snuff without discretion. Very few actors are to be trusted with a snuff-box; indiscreetly used, it fritters points away, instead of sharpening them.'

Charles Reade's praise of Mr. Coghlan's fine acting as Sir Charles Pomander, and of Ellen Terry's exquisite performance of Mabel Vane, is faintly qualified. He then falls foul, in his severest strain, of one actor in the cast, lengthily and ably analysing the character, the rendition of which greatly distressed him. The letter ends:

'But who can foretell the future? You and Mrs. Bancroft, and Miss Terry, have got the third act pretty much to yourselves, and you may be able to make the piece safe. Still, you must not fancy that the play is written unevenly. Of course, it is written on the principle of climax, and the third act is the most brilliant; but, remember, too, in the third act we grease the fat sow, for the act is nearly all in the hands of first-rate actors.

'You will wonder at this tirade, but the fact is, my winter cough has come on. I shall most likely not be out at nights for three months, and may never again have the great pleasure of seeing your performance and Mrs. Bancroft's, so I say my say and exhaust the subject.

'If . . . has moved my bile, everything else is so gratifying that I shall be sure to forgive even poor . . . ; all the sooner for having let out at him in this outrageous way, and so eased my mind.

'Yours very sincerely,

'CHARLES READE.'

Among our collection of letters are also some others that should be placed here, the first being from our valued friend, Sir William Fergusson :

'16, George Street,
Hanover Square, W.,
*March* 15, 1876.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

'I have to thank you most heartily for the great treat of last night. I have rarely enjoyed myself more thoroughly at the theatre. I was familiar with the play in former days, when Mrs. Stirling and Webster were in all their force ; and, though prepared by newspaper and other reports to be pleased, I fancied that old recollections would cause me to feel a blank.

'From the beginning to the end last night my interest never flagged ; and, with pleasant memories of the past, I cannot refrain from saying to you and your good man how truly I was gratified.

'Both of you must be much fatigued with such hard work, and I sincerely wish you a continuance of health and strength for your arduous labours.

'We suppose ourselves considerable theatrical

critics in this house, and I am glad to say that we are all of the same opinion in regard to the enjoyment of last evening.

'With kind regards to Squire,

'I remain,

'Yours very sincerely,

'WM. FERGUSSON.'

Then came some pleasant lines from an old actor who passed many years in America, and whose acquaintance we regret never to have made:

'101, Gower Street.

'DEAR SIR,

'I have to thank you for a great pleasure last night, in the charming performance of Mrs. Bancroft. It is years since I saw the play, and I confess to you that I did not know there was an English-speaking actress who could move me to tears and laughter by turns as the accomplished Peg Woffington did last night. Her comedy reminded me of poor Nisbett in her best days; and her pathos had the sincerity in it which that accomplished comedienne never reached.

'I had not seen you act before, and your Triplet was a worthy pendant to your lady's admirable picture.

'With many thanks,

'I am, yours faithfully,

'GEO. VANDENHOFF.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

Before we finally dismiss *Masks and Faces* upon its bright career, let us mention the charming Woffington Gavotte, dedicated to Mrs. Bancroft, and expressly composed for the second act by Mr. Meredith Ball, which earned at once exceptional and universal success. For months it was rare to come across a selection of music that did not comprise it.

Our search after new plays never ceased. Of all the wilderness of manuscripts that we had read since Robertson's death, only *Man and Wife* and *Sweethearts* seemed to us worthy of production. A new play written for us by H. J. Byron we had felt bound to decline when it was finished (which subsequently failed entirely when produced elsewhere), preferring now to give him a commission for a comedy in its place, with a guarantee to act it immediately *Masks and Faces* was withdrawn. The bare outline of plot decided on between us was, roughly, in this wise: the suggestion growing from the idea of a sort of amplification of the young people and the old people in Gilbert's delightful play. There were to be contrasts of age throughout: in the first act young folk were to injure old folk, and in the end, when they had grown quite old themselves, were to redeem their error, and repair their wrong, by compensating for it to the youthful descendants—to be acted by the same people—of the old couple whom they had wronged in their youth. This was accompanied by a strict injunction that the parts for Coghlan and

Ellen Terry were to be of the first importance, while ours might be quite secondary.

In February Byron read to us two acts of what was to be a three-act comedy, and bitter was our disappointment; the only parts of any value were those destined for ourselves, while the intended story was quite departed from and drifted into other channels. We determined to face our obligation, and to hope for something better from the last act. Unfortunately this did not mend matters, for we found it impossible even to ask Miss Terry to take the part designed for her, and Mr. Coghlan refused (with every justice) to accept the character intended for him, after the author's reading.

With the firm resolve never again to blindly accept an unwritten play from any dramatist, we went bravely to work upon *Wrinkles*, as Byron eventually christened his play. So strongly, however, were we convinced how little right we had to hope for success, that we turned for the first time to a fruitful source we had till now, although often strongly tempted, abstained from drawing on—the French stage—to find something there we could get ready quickly if our forebodings should be realized. We had often and often hankered after Sardou's *Pattes de Mouche*, and now decided that it should be at once got ready. Towards this end, we saw Tom Taylor, and arranged with him, as a master of the art of adaptation, for a new version of this brilliant comedy, on lines he quite agreed with, to be prepared with all speed, that it

might be in our hands to stem the torrent of disaster we felt, still more surely as we advanced with the rehearsals, must be the fate of our new venture.

An announcement that Taylor was engaged upon this work for us appeared in the columns of the *World*, and soon afterwards was followed by a letter from Hare to say that the idea of *Les Pattes de Mouche* had also occurred to him, and that he wished to revive the existing English version of the play, *A Scrap of Paper*, to replace a programme which had failed to attract. Our emotions were very conflicting between a strong desire to produce a version of the comedy ourselves, and an equally strong desire not to thwart the wishes of an old friend, towards whom, in fact, we were anxious to show good feeling. This desire proved the stronger of the two, and with very deep regret we stopped Tom Taylor's work, and gave up two parts we have always wished, and even still would like, to play.

Another novelty we hoped to have on hand was one which Wilkie Collins was engaged upon—a stage version of his extraordinary book, *The Moonstone*. This we looked towards as the opening play for Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and Mr. Arthur Cecil at our theatre, they having accepted engagements with us which were to commence in the following autumn.

Although our fears for Byron's comedy were so great, we spared neither money nor pains over it, and, anxious to know its fate, we withdrew *Masks and Faces* before there was any real need, knowing

it would in the future prove a valuable revival, for it had only been acted a hundred and thirty nights. On the morning before *Wrinkles* was produced, we met our old friend Corney Grain in Bond Street, who asked us if we were going to have what he called 'our usual success.' We at once said, No, and that its fate was sealed; for we were never blinded to the faults of the play by the excellence of our own parts, which contained some of the most amusing things its gifted author ever wrote. We went to our work with heavy hearts to face the following programme:

*On Thursday, April 13th, 1876, for the first time,*

WRINKLES,

*Written by Henry J. Byron.*

Act I.—Spring: April, 1855.

Characters:

| | |
|---|---|
| GRAHAM CARRE | MR. FLOCKTON. |
| HAROLD CARRE | MR. REGINALD MOORE |
| BOB BLEWITT | MR. BANCROFT. |
| WILFRED GORDON | MR. ARCHER. |
| RENSHAW | MR. NEWTON. |
| REUBEN GRAY | MR. GLOVER. |
| KATE RAYNER | MISS CARLISLE. |
| WINIFRED PIPER | MISS MARIE WILTON. (Mrs. Bancroft.) |

Act II.—Autumn: September, 1875. Act III.—Winter: March, 1876.

Characters:

| | |
|---|---|
| MR. CARRE | MR. REGINALD MOORE. |
| WILFRED GORDON | MR. ARCHER. |
| MR. BLEWITT | MR. BANCROFT. |
| FRED LYNTON | MR. KYRLE. |
| MR. RADFORD | MR. TEESDALE. |
| GRAY | MR. GLOVER. |
| KATE CARRE | MISS CARLISLE. |
| MISS PIPER | MISS MARIE WILTON. (Mrs. Bancroft.) |

There is an indescribable magnetism between the audience and the actor on 'first nights,' and although the parts of Bob Blewitt and Winifred Piper were so amusing, and provoked such roars of laughter that at times they almost threatened to save the play, the story was so poor, and Byron had been so obstinate about some proposed changes at the end of it, that our fears were prophetic, and the curtain fell to a chorus of ominous sounds, which pronounced the play to be a flat failure.

On the following morning poor Byron came to us very contrite, and, when too late, made the alterations we had wanted from the first. He deeply regretted the failure for our sakes, as well as his own, and wished to forego all fees. This, of course, we would not listen to, and resolved to turn the tide as best we could. It was here our wished-for *Pattes de Mouche* would have served us well and justified our belief, as was amply proved by the success which had attended the production of *A Scrap of Paper* at the Court Theatre.

It was in *Wrinkles* that Mr. Kyrle Bellew made his first appearance, whom it was a great pleasure to us to be the means of introducing to the stage, in remembrance of our friendship with his father.

*Faute de mieux*, for we were in a terrible fix, we decided on a revival of *Ours* to help us out of the difficulty. Ellen Terry at once consented to play Blanche Haye, adding, with great good nature, that she would even have taken the part in *Wrinkles*

had we asked her. We announced the failure of Mr. Byron's comedy in our advertisements, and withdrew it after eighteen performances.

On Saturday, May 6th, *Ours* was acted with the following cast of the characters: Prince Perovsky, Mr. Archer; Colonel Shendryn, Mr. Flockton; Captain Samprey, Mr. Denison; Angus Mac Alister, Mr. Coghlan; Hugh Chalcot, Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. Collette; Lady Shendryn, Mrs. Leigh Murray; Blanche Haye, Miss Ellen Terry; and Mary Netley, Miss Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft).

As the comedy had not been played since its run in 1870-71, it really came out quite fresh again, and was received with all the old enthusiasm. Indeed, we believe that we might have put the six Robertsonian plays upon a sort of dramatic wheel, and have gone on for years, with nothing but successive revivals of them in their turn, had neither madness nor crutches intervened. The charm of Ellen Terry's acting on this occasion was a great advantage, and added much to the effect of the second act—perhaps the cleverest in all the author's works: appealing as it does so powerfully to the imagination without introducing a single element of drama upon the actual scene.

*The Moonstone*, in which it was proposed that Mr. and Mrs. Kendal should act for the first time with us as Franklin Blake and Rachel Verrinder, while Mr. Arthur Cecil was to be the Betteridge, we

having ourselves agreed to take the parts of Sergeant Cuff and Miss Clack (this tract-distributing, amusing spinster would have offered Mrs. Bancroft an opportunity for character-painting which was altogether removed from the range of parts she had been acting, and she resigned it with regret), was thought by Wilkie Collins and ourselves to be, perhaps, too melodramatic in its treatment for the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and better suited to follow the great success of the same author's *New Magdalen* at the Olympic. When this decision was arrived at, we found ourselves somewhat stranded for an autumn production suitable to the theatre and the newcomers. Nothing new appeared upon the scene, and, following up our faith in *Les Pattes de Mouche*, Sardou's works were again applied to, the result being a decision to have a version of *Nos Intimes* prepared. Mr. B. C. Stephenson, who then had always written as Mr. 'Bolton Rowe,' had long been anxious to do some work for us, and he, in the first place, was commissioned to commence the adaptation, which was completed by Mr. Clement Scott, who wished to preserve his *incognito*, and chose the *nom de plume* of 'Saville Rowe.' Mr. Scott was selected as *collaborateur* on account of his marvellous power of speed, and he revised and much improved the adaptation with great rapidity.

*Ours*, meanwhile, was drawing houses crowded in every part, as though it were a brand-new play, when the full tide of this great success received an un-

happy check through sudden illness. On Thursday, June 15th, Mrs. Bancroft was unable to finish the part of Mary Netley, and had to be taken home in a state of great suffering after the second act. She struggled through her work on the following evening, but on Saturday a long illness befell her, and her sister Blanche took her place at the theatre. On the Monday evening—too late, unfortunately, to make any arrangements to replace her—Miss Ellen Terry was also taken ill, and telegraphed her inability to act. There was no alternative but to close the theatre for the evening. On the next night Miss Irwin, who had been attached to one of the country companies, and was familiar with the play, appeared as Blanche Haye. It may be easily imagined that the double calamity of Mrs. Bancroft and Miss Ellen Terry both having to withdraw from the theatre, was a death-blow to the revival. At the end of the season there were important changes in the company. Miss Ellen Terry was going to the Court Theatre; and Mr. Coghlan had decided to try his fortunes in America. It was at this time, also, that Mr. James ended his long and friendly connection with the theatre as our business manager, Mr. Charles Walter being engaged as his successor. These changes were carried even further, for we had resolved upon an entire and still more elaborate redecoration of the theatre during the vacation, and the work had been for a long time in progress.

In the summer of this year I met by chance

H. J. Montague in the Strand, who was on a visit for a few weeks from America, which country he had now quite made his home. While we were talking, Henry Irving joined us, and we all three arranged to dine together. The remembrance of the few happy hours we so passed are tinged with the sad thought that I never saw Montague again.

The rehearsals of the version of *Nos Intimes*, which was to be called *Peril*, occupied the time until the close of the season on August 4th. We then went for our holiday abroad, Mrs. Bancroft's health being sufficiently restored to allow her to travel by easy stages. A few pleasant days were again passed with friends at the Baur au Lac, Zurich; afterwards we went on to the Kaltbad, where we found Palgrave Simpson, who seemed a sort of summer fixture there, Arthur Cecil, and Clement Scott among the visitors.

Those were the days of youth and high spirits, and when I am afraid I must confess to have been something of a practical joker; even in such a boyish fashion as one night, when a friend and I had the outside of the hotel to ourselves—for the chance happened while a dance was going on in the drawing-room, which opened by very large French windows on to the terrace—driving some Swiss cows, which had strayed down the mountain, into the midst of the dancers, who scattered themselves in all directions with cries of 'Les vaches! les vaches!' We must have plagued the musicians

terribly, too, for we were always busy in the morning hiding the drum-sticks. The performer on the noisy instrument they belonged to passed much of his time in violent gesticulations, and uttering the oft-repeated question, 'Wo sind die Trommelschlägel?'

NOTES BY M. E. B.

Palgrave Simpson and I were fond of wandering in the 'wilderness,' as we called the grounds adjacent to the hotel. This meander was always a pleasure to him, only marred by the constant chatter of a pretty Swiss peasant child, who would follow Palgrave about, offering fruit for sale. This would invariably happen at a most interesting point of our conversation: 'Veel you have zome beaches?' 'No! No! No!' 'Dey am goot fur you.' '*No*, I tell you; *no!*' 'Your moder say vot dey am goot for you.' 'Go away; I am not ill. Bother the child!' The wicked little minx loved to tease poor old Palgrave. She liked to hear him use his favourite expression, 'Lud a mussy!' and until he had said it she would not leave his side.

In the visitors' list there was generally a difficulty with his name unless he entered it himself. It once appeared at Lucerne on the large blackboard in the hall of the Schweizerhof as 'Mr. Balgravez,' and somewhere else he was described as 'Mr. T. Club.' He remarked, 'Oh, Lud a mussy! What will they call me next? Jack Pudding, I dare say!'

Anecdotes of eminent people are generally inter-

esting, as we think the following incident in the life of so old a friend of the public as the eminent musician, Sir Julius Benedict, will be. It occurred during this stay at the Kaltbad, where we were much amused by constantly discovering strange likenesses amongst the visitors to many of our acquaintances and friends, until at last we spoke of them by the names of those whom they resembled. There was an old lady in the hotel whose features so wonderfully suggested Sir Julius Benedict, that we never called her, among ourselves, by any other name. Whether reading, writing, sitting, or walking, she still was the living image of Sir Julius.

One terribly wet day, when we were quite in cloudland, the mist being so dense that nothing could be seen beyond the railings of the terrace, and few had ventured beyond it, who should appear, to our amazement, but the veritable Sir Julius himself, having, in spite of the weather, come up from Lucerne for the purpose of seeing the Rigi.

He told us that when he started it was finer, and he was determined not to turn back, as he had never seen the Rigi, and was obliged to return to England on the following day, adding, 'I am old now, and may never have another opportunity, so I must see the mountain to-day, wet or dry.'

With wonderful pluck he walked in the drenching rain from the Kaltbad to the Kulm, had a look round, but of course saw very little, for view there was none. He then walked down again to our hotel,

and, after having coffee with us, expressed a wish to see the principal rooms. When we came to the large drawing-room, we saw the little old lady who went by the name of 'Sir Julius,' sitting reading in an easy-chair at the farther end of it. As we entered we looked at one another, and, with a smile, wondered whether we should draw attention to the resemblance. In a moment our merriment was changed to sentiment. No sooner had Sir Julius's name been uttered, and he had advanced a few steps towards his prototype, than the old lady looked up, fixed her eyes upon him for a moment, as though to realize, as it were, the fact that she was not dreaming, then rose from her chair, approached slowly, and with tears in her eyes exclaimed, 'Ach, Jules! mein Gott, sind Sie es!' The old man started, and seemed suddenly affected, then, kissing both her hands, said, 'Meine liebe! meine alte Freundin!' Greatly surprised at this touching recognition, we left the old couple alone, and they conversed for a considerable time together.

Before leaving, Sir Julius told us the history of this little drama. The old lady had been the object of his earliest love, the first real romance of his life, and they had not met for full forty years. I never forgot this little episode, and, when next I played the part of Jenny Northcott in *Sweethearts*, I repeated some of it in the scene where Henry Spreadbrow returns, after an absence of thirty years, to find that his early love had remained constant to his

memory all that time. It was a touch of nature which I could not do better than imitate.

The following letter of mine will describe our movements when we left the Lake of Lucerne :

'Hotel Monnet, Vevey,
*Saturday, September* 2 (1876).

'My dear ———

'We were driven here by bad weather in the mountains, and have found the sun again.

'I will now tell you more of our holiday travels. When we left the Kaltbad, our journey was made very pleasant by having our old friends Arthur Cecil and Clement Scott as travelling companions. I had an attack of hay fever (my old enemy) on our way to Andermatt, which inflamed my eyes dreadfully and left me so miserable and depressed, that on our arrival at the hotel, instead of being able to join our party at dinner, I was glad to go to bed. By the next morning, however, I was quite myself again, and we continued our journey by carriage, over the Furka Pass. At the little inn on the summit we read the Queen's signature, written some years ago, as "Countess of Kent," in the visitors' book. Our next stopping-place was the Rhone Glacier Hotel, where the flies were so thick on the ceiling of our room that it had the appearance of being covered with a heavy black pattern. I laugh as I write this, for when Arthur Cecil came down to breakfast he said, 'Oh, Mrs. B., I have had such a night!' It appeared that before going to bed

he had pulled the bell-rope and disturbed what seemed a myriad of flies, which had taken up their quarters upon it; having been so suddenly alarmed they were restless all night, and tormented poor Arthur dreadfully. The next morning the air was so full of these creatures that I was glad to dress quickly and get away. They were quite as tiresome as mosquitoes, only not so vicious.

'We made our way to the Eggischorn, the men walking to the top whilst I was taken up *chaise à porteur*. We were unfortunate in our weather during our three days' stay there, and none of us were able to see much. It was intensely cold, and one night, when everybody got as near to the wood fire as possible, all looking the reverse of happy, I suggested to Mr. Cecil that he and I should try to make the evening a little pleasanter, so we began by playing games, and introduced one which chanced to be quite new to them all. I placed the visitors round me in a circle, standing in the middle myself as conductor of an imaginary orchestra, asking my "band" to choose various musical instruments, and to play in dumb show so long as I conducted with the *bâton;* but of course you will know the game, so I need not describe it. All the visitors joined in it heart and soul, and it was most amusing to see the sage-looking scholars and pedagogues enjoying the fun. One of my orchestra was Dr. George Johnson, the celebrated physician, who, with his two daughters, was up there; another resident was Dr. Jex Blake. Thus

we turned a dull evening into a merry one.' [NOTE. —A long time afterwards, at an evening party, a gentleman came up to me, saying, 'Let me bring myself to your recollection, Mrs. Bancroft. I was the Jew's-harp in your Eggischorn orchestra some years ago.'] 'The next night, still wet and misty, the visitors seemed to look to us for help again, so with the addition of dumb crambo (as I have never seen it done before), we sent them all to bed at midnight instead of 9.30, their usual hour. Even the tired servants could not be persuaded to retire to rest. When we left the hotel, the visitors turned out *en masse* to see us off. I forgot to tell you before that we met the young black Prince of Abyssinia, who was under the care of Dr. Jex Blake. He was highly intelligent and interesting to talk to. One day I found him reading "The Last Days of Pompeii," and I remarked that I had read the book three times myself. He answered, "Well, I think I must read it all through again, I am so very pleased with it."

'Then came a lovely walk (for Mr. Bancroft and the others, I being still taken *chaise à porteur*) over the Rieder Alp, and, across the foot of the great Aletsch Glacier, up to the primitive little inn on the Bel Alp. On our way we discovered that my travelling-bag had been left behind at the Eggischorn. We sent a telegram at once, and, late at night as I sat at my bedroom window, I could see down below, some six hundred feet, a strange moving light going

slowly and cautiously across the glacier. This turned out to be a lighted lantern which was held by one man preceding another who carried my missing bag. I felt quite sorry for them going through what seemed to be such a perilous journey in the dark, being as I thought bad enough in the daylight.

'After staying at the Bel Alp three days we started (the same procession as before) for Brigue; the morning was very cold, and Professor Tyndall, whose acquaintance with that of Mrs. Tyndall we had the pleasure of making, very kindly insisted upon wrapping me up in his travelling plaidie, which I sent back to him by one of the porters who carried me down the mountain. On the way, Mr. Scott walked by the side of my chair-bearers and was telling me of an accident which once befell Palgrave Simpson, who fell and injured his foot, in the very descent which we were making. Directly afterwards we heard shouts and cries lower down the steep, stony path, and sent on one of our porters to ascertain what was the matter. It transpired that Arthur Cecil, who had gone on in advance, had fallen and sprained his foot badly, being led by a man on each side of him into Brigue. It seemed so strange that this should have happened just at the moment when I was listening to the account of another accident in a similar way, and on the same mountain! I shall write again soon.

'Ever affectionately,

'M. E. B.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SEASON OF 1876-77.

We had a very busy ten days before our re-opening, knowing the hazardous card we had resolved to play by venturing for the first time into French drama. Although our main attention was given to the play, some part of it was, perforce, bestowed upon the new decorations and the furniture, which was replaced throughout the theatre. The general tone was deep amber satin and dark red, in place of the former light blue. Both tiers of box-fronts were decorated with allegorical paintings typical of the plays we had produced, and, to harmonize with a peacock frieze over the proscenium, which was very elaborately painted on a gold ground, handsome fans made of peacocks' feathers were attached to each of the private boxes by gilt chains.

BEGUN BY S. B. B.

There is an old superstition that these beautiful plumes bring sickness with them. On the opening night of the season it so befell that an occupant of one of the front stalls was seized with a fit during the

first act of *Peril*, and a lady had to be taken home through sudden illness from a private box. Only a single audience saw the fans, for this strange assertion, as it were, that there might be truth in the superstitious saying, ended in their banishment for ever.

Barring some nervousness caused to the actors by these little *contretemps* in front of the curtain, all went well behind it. The play and the new-comers were well received, and our anxieties set at rest by its enthusiastic reception. The company was reinforced by such leading members as Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and Arthur Cecil, with valuable supporters in Henry Kemble and Charles Sugden, as the playbill of the re-opening will show:

*The theatre has been re-decorated from designs suggested by Mr. Bancroft, executed by Mr. Gordon, Mr. Harford, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Ballard.*

*On Saturday, September 30th, 1876, at eight o'clock, will be produced a new comedy in four acts, called PERIL, adapted for the English stage from M. Victorien Sardou's 'Nos Intimes,' by Mr. Saville Rowe and Mr. Bolton Rowe.*

Characters:

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR GEORGE ORMOND, BART. | Mr. Bancroft. |
| SIR WOODBINE GRAFTON, K.C.S.I. | Mr. Arthur Cecil. |
| PERCY GRAFTON | Mr. W. Younge. |
| DR. THORNTON | Mr. Kendal. |
| CAPTAIN BRADFORD | Mr. Charles Sugden. |
| MR. CROSSLEY BECK | Mr. Kemble. |
| MEADOWS | Mr. Newton. |
| KEMP | Mr. Glover. |
| LADY ORMOND | Miss Madge Robertson. (Mrs. Kendal.) |
| LUCY ORMOND | Miss Buckstone. |
| MRS. CROSSLEY BECK | Mrs. Leigh Murray. |
| SOPHIE | Miss Hertz. |

The scene is laid at Ormond Court.

A new one-act play, written by Mr. Saville Rowe, was announced at the foot of the programme. This referred to *The Vicarage*, which had been charmingly written at our suggestion by Mr. Clement Scott on Octave Feuillet's little story *Le Village*.

Naturally enough, there was much division of opinion in the Press as to the merits of *Peril*, and some repining that we had not been able to find a new English comedy to our liking.

The play was splendidly placed upon the stage: the old oak hall of Ormond Court took days to erect, and was so elaborately built with its massive staircase and rooms leading from a gallery as to make it impossible to remove it entirely for change of scene. We so arranged the play as to allow the hall to remain almost intact during three acts, the boudoir being constructed to be 'set' inside the walls of it; in fact, from November to the following April the stage wore the aspect, day and night, of an Elizabethan interior, furnished with a wealth of oak and armour, so mixed with decorative china and modern luxuries as to make it often worth a visit apart from its stage aspect.

The success of the production was extraordinary, and maintained receipts as large as any of its predecessors in the little theatre excepting only *School*.

I grew to like my own part very much, although when first the play was thought of I had a great wish to act the Doctor. This, however, we gave

to Mr. Kendal, it being very desirable to make so important an addition to the company happy. Sir George Ormond, with his tender vein of manly pathos in the third act, became quite a compensation, and I believe the performance advanced my reputation.

On October 26th, a banquet was given at the Mansion House to the theatrical profession by the Lord Mayor, Mr. Alderman Cotton. At this lapse of time it may be interesting if the reader is reminded by a list of the chief guests who then were thought the leading actors and dramatic lights of the town :

Miss Carlotta Addison, Mr. James Albery, Mr. G. W. Anson, Mr. F. Archer, Signor Arditi, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, Mr. Barnes, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Barrett, Mr. Shiel Barry, Mr. W. Belford, Mr. and Mrs. Billington, Miss Kate Bishop, Mr. E. L. Blanchard, Madame Bodda (Miss Louisa Pyne), Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Brough, Mr. Edgar Bruce, Mr. Buckstone, Miss Lucy Buckstone, Ald. Sir Robert Carden, Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mrs. Nye Chart, Mr. and Mrs. John Clarke, Mr. John Coleman, Mr. Charles Collette, Mr. H. B. Conway, Mr. George Conquest, Mr. H. T. Craven, Mr. Creswick, Mr. Dillon Croker, Mr. Charles Dickens, Mr. Everill, Miss Farren, Mr. Fernandez, Mr. David Fisher, Mr. Flockton, Miss E. Fowler, Mr. W. S. Gilbert, Miss Glyn, Mr. Otto Goldschmidt, Madame Lind Goldschmidt, Mr. Corney Grain, Mr. C. L. Gruneisen, Mr. Andrew Halliday, Mr. Charles Harcourt, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Henderson (Miss Lydia Thompson), Mr. W. J. Hill, Miss Henrietta Hodson, Mr. and Miss Hollingshead, Mr. George Honey, Mr. Howe, Miss Rose Hersee, Mr. David James, Miss Fanny Josephs, Mrs. Keeley, Mr. C. Kelly, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. J. Knowles, Mr. H. Labouchere, Mrs. S. Lane, Miss Larkin, Miss Leighton, Mrs. Arthur Lewis (Miss Kate Terry), Miss Litton, Mr. Charles Lyall, M. Marius, Mr. Frank Marshall, Mr. Henry Marston, Mr. Mead, Mrs. Alfred Mellon, Mr. Paul Merritt, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Monckton, Mrs. Gaston Murray, Mr. Henry Neville, Mr. Odell, Miss M. Oliver, Mr. John Parry, Mr. Phelps, Mr. Planché, Mr. R. Reece, Mr. and Mrs. German Reed, Mr. Righton, Mr. W. Rignold, Mr. Carl

Rosa, Miss Amy Roselle, Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, Mr. Ryder, M. and Madame Sainton, Mr. G. A. Sala, Mr. Clement Scott, Mr. E. T. Smith, Mrs. Stirling, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Stirling, Mr. C. Sugden, Mrs. Swanborough, Miss Ada Swanborough, Mr. Tom Taylor, Mr. Edward Terry, Miss Ellen Terry, Miss M. Terry, Mr. Thomas Thorne, Mr. C. Vandenhoff, Mr. W. H. Vernon, Miss Venne, Mr. and Mrs. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Charles Warner, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan, Mr. Horace Wigan, Mr. W. G. Wills, Hon. Lewis Wingfield, Mrs. John Wood, and others.

We can relate an amusing incident which occurred during the repast. One of the waiters handed some soup to a distinguished actress, who declined it. The man then said, with a persuasive smile, '*Turtle* soup, ma'am.' The dish was still refused, evidently to the waiter's amazement, for he returned to the charge with the remark, 'REAL *turtle*, ma'am!' When the lady still said 'No,' the expression on the man's face of mingled surprise, pity, and contempt must be imagined.

There were, of course, many speeches, for one of which I was called upon, and took occasion to allude to the late Mr. Robertson in this way: 'In her endeavour, at the outset of management, to tune, as it were, the fancy of modern manners to the beating of the heart, Mrs. Bancroft was strengthened with the strong hand of genius, and encouraged by the sympathy of a friend. When Thomas William Robertson was taken from us, we, and the stage we love, mourned a common friend. His was no chance success, as many have insisted; it was lasting. His influence was not ephemeral; it is with us now.'

A SEASIDE HOLIDAY BY MRS. BANCROFT.

*Peril* was so established in the favour of the public, that I spent some weeks at Brighton, being joined for the Sundays and the Mondays by my husband, and pleasant detachments of friends both among the company and outside its cheery circle. Long drives and walks to the Dyke or Rottingdean passed the afternoons, and merry dinners wound up the evenings. Among the friends of those days was poor E. F. Pellew; his cheery laugh, his bright companionship, his sweet tenor voice (which always startled a fresh hearer, who looked for deeper tones from so large a frame), are gone for ever; but the remembrance of his great good-nature lives with many of us still.

We took part of a house on the King's Road, where there was a very remarkable young person engaged as upper-housemaid, who had the wonderful gift of twisting the Queen's English about in such a manner that it was at times more than difficult to understand her meaning. I don't think she knew herself what the words she tried to pronounce meant, but it was her evident delight to give utterance to the most extraordinary gibberish I ever listened to. She was a veritable Mrs. Malaprop from a housemaid's point of view. I accidentally from my dressing-room overheard conversations between her and a fellow-servant, and if the door was partly open, I confess I was so attracted by her wonderful power of word-twisting that I did not shut it. She assumed a kind of mincing way of speaking, and I took down

in pencil all the wonderful things she said. In the following conversation I reproduce them in their integrity :

ANNE : 'Where does your parents live then ?'

JANE : 'They used to reside in 'Ighgate (put that picture straight, it 'esitates me), but my mother found the air of 'Ighgate too strong for her, and when she took ill the doctor said she must move to a more atmospheric place. My poor mother had a bad time with my father. He was a cruel 'usband, and behaved to her like a medicated scoundrel.'

ANNE : 'Well, I never !'

JANE : 'He was her second husband, you know, and we never liked him. My poor dear father died five years ago. His sufferings were awful ; he had a couple of ulsters in his inside.'

ANNE : 'What, *two* of 'em ?'

JANE : 'Yes. So he died.'

ANNE : 'I should think he did.'

JANE : 'We didn't wish mother to re-wed, and we up and told her one day that if she did we would go out of the house, as any second husband we should look upon as an antelope.'

ANNE : 'Why, of course.'

JANE : 'Well, she did marry again, and he was a punishment to her, for he was always ill and complaining. Mother was nothing but a nurse. First he had an illustrated sore throat, and was awful bad when the influential gales was blowin' ; but he died of various veins in his legs, a year ago, I am happy

to say, for he hated us, and we hated him. He gave himself such airs and got that *'aughty* that at last he arrived at such a perrogative he couldn't consume it!'

I frequently spent my early morning in studying a new part, going down to the beach and sitting on a bench there in a quiet spot. One day I found myself quite alone for some time, when, presently, I observed two ragged little girls playing amongst the shingle. They were not near enough to disturb me, so I made no attempt to move. By-and-by, however, one of them, who had been staring at me from a little distance, became more interested in my occupation, and gradually ventured nearer. She stood gazing at me for some time, which made me feel fidgety, and I was just on the point of telling the child to run away, when, after a snuffle (for I presume pocket-handkerchiefs were at a premium with her) she started a conversation. Her costume was limited to a poor ragged frock over nothing at all, neither shoes nor stockings, long lank hair, and an old straw-hat with the torn crown hanging on one side of a very dirty face. She stood with her hands behind her, and commenced:

CHILD: 'Are you readin', loidy?' (snuffle).

SELF: 'Why, of course; can't you see, child?'

CHILD: 'What are you a-readin' of?'

SELF: 'A book.'

CHILD: 'Is it a *noice* book? Is there fairies wot gives you things?'

SELF: 'What things?'

CHILD: 'Puddens and coikes!' (a big snuffle).

SELF: 'No, nothing of that sort.'

CHILD: 'Then wot's the good o' readin' of it?' (The child comes near and seats herself by my side, swinging her legs to and fro. After a pause, and a good stare)—

CHILD: 'Are you a pretty loidy?'

SELF (inclined for a joke): 'I am considered the beauty of Brighton.'

CHILD (after a long look): 'Oh! *I* don't think so.'

SELF: 'I'm sorry for that.'

CHILD (still swinging her legs): 'I like your 'at.'

SELF: 'I'm glad you like something.'

CHILD: 'My mother 'as one jist loike it.'

SELF: 'Really?'

CHILD: 'Yes; she bought it for a shillin' in 'Igh Street.'

The frankness of the remarks greatly amused me. Suddenly the girl made a move to go, saying, 'Good-bye, loidy,' when I remarked, 'You are going home to dinner, I suppose.' She shook her lank hair, and replied in the same artless manner: 'No; I ain't got no dinner; never 'ave no dinner, 'cept on Sundays.' I began to get interested in the poor little waif, and inquired further. 'No dinner except on Sundays?'

CHILD: 'No, loidy.'

SELF: 'A good tea, I dare say.'

CHILD: 'Only dry bread. Mother can't give us no butter.'

SELF: 'If I gave you a penny, what would you do with it?'

CHILD (with a look, not being able to realize the possibility of such a gift): 'I would buy a bun' (a loud and prolonged snuffle).

I gave the child money, and she rapidly disappeared in the direction of the shops. Coming hurriedly back, she seated herself on the beach by the side of her ragged playmate, with whom she shared her bun; I was touched by the instinct to divide her treasure with her poor companion. The child had some dinner, and we became very good friends in the future.

This case of real poverty reminds me that I am, like others, frequently accosted in the streets by professional beggars, and often I cannot resist the temptation of indulging in a little cross-examination, more especially when I have reason to believe that the mendicant is a sham. One day I was walking with a friend, when a boy, whose begrimed face wore the imploring expression which is so common amongst street beggars, and which gives them all a certain resemblance, addressed me without any hesitation (his speech naturally having had a very long run): 'Please, mum, a halfpenny, mum. So 'ungree, mum. Ain't 'ad nothink to heat since yesterday morin', mum. Do, mum; I'm a poor horfun, mum.' 'Poor boy! An orphan?' 'Yes, mum.' 'Dear me! Where do your father and mother live?' 'In Queen Street, mum!' (*Exit.*)

During another walk I was addressed by a humble but apparently respectable woman, who, I must confess, succeeded in completely taking me in, for she did not ask for alms. She was a Frenchwoman, and spoke to me in her native tongue: 'Madame, veuillez m'indiquer la route pour Finsbury Square?' I directed her as well as I could, seeing that we were standing in Portland Place; and as she left me she gave a piteous sigh and walked slowly along. It occurred to me that she possibly was trying to get to some friends, and had not the means to take omnibus or cab, so I offered her some money, which, after well-acted surprise, she accepted with a profusion of thanks. Six weeks afterwards I met the woman again, but not recognising *me* she asked the same question, to which I replied, to her evident confusion, 'Comment! Vous ne l'avez pas encore trouvé?'

One more story of mendicity, and I will leave my indigent friends to play out their dramas undisturbed by me. This is an incident quite opposite in character, one of those sad cases which touch the heart very deeply; but, painful as it is, there is a tinge of serio-comic in the tale at which, while sympathizing with the cause, one cannot resist a smile. A lady of culture, reduced to the last stage of penury, and driven by hopeless despair to beggary, having tried everything in the shape of work to keep body and soul together, was, at last, forced by cruel fortune to a state bordering on distraction; she cared not for herself, but her baby boy cried for food, and some-

thing must be done. Being at her wits' end, she conceived the idea of going round to the various houses in the hope of selling muffins; she hid her face as best she could, and, under the shelter of a dark night, started on her weary errand. The poor lady wandered from street to street, stopping to gaze down at the kitchen windows, but could not for the life of her summon up courage to ring the muffin-bell. At length, made desperate by the remembrance of her baby boy, she *did* gently ring it, whispering feebly over an area gate, '*Muffins!*' The very sound of the bell, and of her own voice, frightened her, and she clung to the railings, muttering under her breath, 'Merciful heaven! I hope they didn't hear it!'

When her little son grows up to manhood, may his devotion to his mother repay her for the indignity she suffered for his sake!

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

*Peril* was the first play of which we gave a series of *matinées*, on alternate Saturdays, for some weeks, and so opened out a distinct source of income for future successful plays. We also, at this time, had the idea of instituting occasional morning performances of programmes distinct from the evening attractions, and, with this view, rehearsed an amusing comedy called *Husbands*, founded on Sardou's *Papillonne*, by Mr. F. Waller. The principal parts were to have been taken by Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. Arthur Cecil, and myself; but the

heavy scene of the hall in *Peril* so blocked up the stage that for a time, at any rate, we abandoned the intention. It was proved, however, at the Court Theatre, a year or two later, to be a valuable method of trying plays. Among those produced there in this way were the *Ladies' Battle*, and another version of *Le Fils de Famille*, which, by the way, I christened the *Queen's Shilling*.

The beginning of the new year was made sad by the death of Mrs. Montagu Williams, whose friendship, with that of her clever husband, we had long enjoyed, and who, before her marriage, and too early retirement, had won such reputation on the stage as Louise Keeley. Those who ever heard Mrs. Williams sing Edgar Allan Poe's masterly ballad, *Annabel Lee*, are not likely to have forgotten her exquisite rendering of the words:

> 'And neither the angels in heaven above,
> Nor the demons down under the sea,
> Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
> Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.'

A very large gathering of a wide circle of the friends of both herself and husband stood round her grave in Brompton Cemetery.

I heard at this time that Sardou was about to produce a new play at the Théâtre du Vaudeville called *Dora*, and, mindful of the great success which was still attending the performance of our version of *Nos Intimes*, made plans to be *en rapport* with the *première*. My part in *Peril* was too important to

allow me to give it up so early in the run, but I was represented in Paris by Mr. B. C. Stephenson. He returned extremely nervous as to the new play's chance of success in England, although much impressed by one or two of its scenes. I pursued the matter further, on the strength of a criticism I read in a French newspaper, and found that the author had already sold the English and American rights to a theatrical agent, a Monsieur Michaelis, with whom I treated, inducing him to give me the refusal of the play until Ash Wednesday, which was fast approaching, when I promised to go to Paris and see the play. This was all settled, and I went over, accompanied by Mr. Kendal, who accepted my invitation for companionship.

We were met at the station by Michaelis, who had procured my seats and secured rooms for us at the Hôtel du Chemin de Fer du Nord, conveniently placed just opposite the Gare. On all occasions of flying visits to see plays I made it a rule to put up there, for as they nearly always occurred in winter, one hardly saw the city by daylight, and the extra time this arrangement gave for breakfast in the morning, with one eye on the station clock and the other on your coffee, was a distinct advantage in having to return by the early mail. We saw the play; at the end of the famous *scène des trois hommes* I went to Michaelis and told him I had seen quite enough, whatever the rest of the play might prove to be, to determine me to give him a cheque

at the end of the performance if he would join Kendal and myself at supper at a little English club, in the Chaussée d'Antin, I then belonged to, but which has since known 'plunging' days at baccarat, and is now no more.

Another fine scene followed in a subsequent act, and I felt assured there was ample material for a play in England, whatever the difficulties of transplanting it from Gallic soil might be, and gladly gave Michaelis fifteen hundred pounds, which was then by far the largest sum ever paid for a foreign work, for his rights, returning after a cheery supper to our hotel quite contented with my bargain.

Soon afterwards we placed the manuscript in the hands of Clement Scott and B. C. Stephenson for consideration as to the line to be taken in its adaptation, with whom, as was our custom with all French plays, we worked in concert. A long time was spent in deciding the plan before the work was begun. This gives me a brief pause to speak of other matters I have to tell.

In February a complimentary performance was given at the Gaiety Theatre to the accomplished entertainer, John Parry, who then took his farewell of the public and appeared for the last time before an audience, which comprised most of the notabilities of the day. He was much affected by the warmth of his reception, and it was some moments before his fingers proved that they still retained their marvellous power over the piano. Fortunately for the

public and his 'troops of friends,' Corney Grain has since proved at least an equal master of the rare and difficult art of amusing large assemblies single-handed; while he in his turn has been followed by the accomplished George Grossmith.

In this month also Mrs. Bancroft, as she was still not acting, gave a reading in public for the first time; the subject chosen was the death of Jo from *Bleak House*, the object being to aid the funds of the Rev. Edward Ker Gray's church, St. Michael's and All Angels, at Notting Hill.

That distinguished actor, Henry Compton, owing to a long illness, so severe as to rob the public for ever of his services, and make it impossible for him to act again, was offered by his brother actors a complimentary benefit. A very representative committee was formed, and a performance organized which proved one of the most successful ever known. The result from all sources, I believe—including a performance in Manchester, where Compton had long been an especial favourite—reached the large sum of five thousand pounds. At one of the committee meetings, a suggestion I made was approved of, that the first act of *Money* would offer a good opportunity for a fine cast, including the veteran actor, Benjamin Webster, if he could be prevailed upon to appear for the event in his original character of Graves, which he had created at the Haymarket nearly forty years before.

Failing Irving as Alfred Evelyn, who did not like

to take a part new to him under such circumstances, and pleaded also as further excuse, in a letter to me, the nightly labour of appearing as the Thane of Cawdor, the committee, I remember, was indebted to Mr. W. S. Gilbert for the admirable proposal that young Mr. Compton should be asked to make his first appearance in London on the occasion as Evelyn, and so give the opportunity to many old friends of showing their regard and affection for his father by taking the minor parts in support of the son. I give this interesting extract from the gigantic programme that was presented at Drury Lane on the morning of March 1st, Lord Lytton's comedy being cast as follows :

| | |
|---|---|
| LORD GLOSSMORE | MR. HENRY NEVILLE. |
| SIR JOHN VESEY | MR. HARE. |
| SIR FREDERICK BLOUNT | MR. KENDAL. |
| GRAVES (*his original character*) | MR. B. WEBSTER. |
| STOUT | MR. DAVID JAMES. |
| ALFRED EVELYN | MR. EDWARD COMPTON. (His first appearance in London.) |
| SHARP | MR. WILLIAM FARREN. |
| SERVANT | MR. BANCROFT. |
| LADY FRANKLIN | MRS. BANCROFT. |
| GEORGINA VESEY | MISS ELLEN TERRY. |
| CLARA DOUGLAS | MRS. KENDAL. |

The selection from *Money* having been suggested by me, I was asked to play Sir Frederick Blount, a part which I had acted for so long a time; but I thought that former leading members of the old Haymarket Company, with which Compton had so long been connected, had the first claim to be associated with his name on such an occasion, so

urged that the character should be offered to Mr. Kendal, and proposed to appear myself as the servant who makes the announcements of the names of those who attend the reading of the will. When I entered, carefully liveried and powdered, I was warmly received by the audience, who burst into loud and general laughter as I announced 'Sir Frederick Blount,' I being more or less identified with that eccentric personage myself.

Webster—who was then nearly, if not quite, eighty, and whose last appearance on the stage I think this was—we had noticed to be in a very infirm state at the one rehearsal he attended, for he had kindly consented to appear. When he came to the wing dressed for the performance, I saw plainly how feeble he was. As his cue approached, he suddenly clung to me in a terror-stricken way, and said with emotion, 'Oh, my dear boy, where am I? I'm very frightened: I don't remember what I have to do.'

I was greatly pained, and dreaded some catastrophe. Fortunately the once famous old actor, whom it was sad indeed to see so shattered, had but a few words to say. I endeavoured to cheer him, and putting my arm round him, said gently, 'It's all right, Mr. Webster; you remember Mrs. Bancroft, don't you?' 'Remember Marie? of course I do.' 'Then, sir, you've nothing to fear: she will come to you and look after you directly you step upon the stage.'

I had to reassure and talk to him in this way as

the cue came nearer and nearer for me to announce him. I told him how and when to follow me; he gave me a last sad, wistful look, and then obeyed me like a little child. After the applause which welcomed the great comedian of days gone by had died away, which he had lost the art of acknowledging, but stood as if in a dream, Mrs. Bancroft gently took her place by the old man's side, as her part allowed her to do, and helped him through the lines he had to speak.

We never met again; but a few days later, in answer to an inquiry with regard to our forthcoming revival of *London Assurance*, I received the following letter from Mr. Webster, written, although very tremblingly, in his own hand:

'Royal Adelphi Theatre,
*March* 21, 1877.

'Dear Mr. Bancroft,

'Pray pardon my not having written to you before, but a nervous attack to my right hand prevented me. *London Assurance* was mine ever since it was written.

'The plot was originally John Brougham's, for which Vestris made Boucicault give him half the proceeds; so, between one and the other, I paid very dearly for it. With kind regards to you and Mrs. Bancroft,

'I am,

'Yours faithfully,

'B. Webster.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

A few weeks afterwards Webster presided as Master at the annual dinner of the Drury Lane Fund, which was held at Richmond, when he startled the assembled company by asking them to drink to '*The King!*' The old actor's memory had grown feeble, and he was living in the far-off past. What else I have to say of this 'light of other days' shall be written when I reach the date of his death.

Clement Scott's 'fireside story,' as he called it, *The Vicarage*, was to be played conjointly with Dion Boucicault's comedy, *London Assurance* (produced originally, by the way, the year I was born, 1841), which, with the author's consent, I had arranged in four acts. Boucicault was in America at the time, and sent me his sanction from Chicago in these words:

'Your shape of *London Assurance* will be, like all you have done at the Prince of Wales's, unexceptionable. I wish I could be there to taste your brew.'

Both pieces were carefully rehearsed long before we needed them, for *Peril*, had we chosen to keep it in the bills, would easily have run through the season; as, however, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal had country engagements in the autumn, and we had decided to produce Sardou's new play in the following January, we resolved on the change at Easter. I gave up my part of Sir George Ormond for the last three nights, and went to Paris with the adaptors to again see *Dora*, and settle, finally, further details

of its treatment for England. Hare and John Clayton travelled by the same train for a short holiday—it being Passion week—and a pleasant time we all passed in the gay city more or less together. I remember well how we all roared over one of the earliest performances of *Bébé* at the Gymnase, afterwards adapted with amazing skill by F. C. Burnand as *Betsy*. In a *coupé* between Paris and Boulogne on our journey home, the whole subject of the new play was well thrashed out between myself and fellow-workers, and we saw our way to what eventually became *Diplomacy*.

The change of programme took place in accordance with the following announcement :

*On Saturday, March 31st, 1877, at ten minutes to eight, will be acted, for the first time, THE VICARAGE, by Mr. Saville Rowe, founded on the French of M. Octave Feuillet.*

'If, when he reached his journey's end
And warmed himself in court or college,
He had not gained an honest friend
And twenty curious scraps of knowledge—
If he departed as he came
With no new light on love, or liquor,
Good sooth, the traveller was to blame,
And not the Vicarage, or the Vicar !'

'*The Vicar*' (*W. Mackworth Praed*).

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|---|---|
| THE REV. NOEL HAYGARTH | MR. ARTHUR CECIL. |
| GEORGE CLARKE, C.B. | MR. KENDAL. |
| MASON | MR. NEWTON. |
| MRS. HAYGARTH | MRS. BANCROFT. |

(Who will ré-appear after nearly a year's absence.)

*Afterwards, revised by the author, and to be played in four acts, Mr. Dion Boucicault's comedy, LONDON ASSURANCE (for the first time at this theatre).*

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|---|---|
| SIR HARCOURT COURTLY | MR. ARTHUR CECIL. |
| CHARLES COURTLY | MR. KENDAL. |
| MR. HARKAWAY | MR. TEESDALE. |

| | |
|---|---|
| MR. SPANKER | MR. KEMBLE. |
| MR. DAZZLE | MR. BANCROFT. |
| MARK MEDDLE | MR. GEORGE HONEY. |
| COOL | MR. SUGDEN. |
| SIMPSON | MR. NEWTON. |
| MARTIN | MR. STUART. |
| LADY GAY SPANKER | MRS. KENDAL. (Miss Madge Robertson.) |
| GRACE HARKAWAY | MISS CARLOTTA ADDISON. (Mrs. La Trobe.) |
| PERT | MRS. BANCROFT. |

NOTES BY M. E. B.

It may be interesting to note here that this was the first play-bill in which my name appeared without the prefix or addition of 'Marie Wilton.'

The double programme of *The Vicarage* and *London Assurance* was not over until very late on the first night, and greatly accounted for the extraordinary silence in which the curtain finally fell. But I shall never forget the effect it had upon all concerned. Mrs. Kendal was amazed; it seemed to take away her breath, and after a long look of surprise, first at one person and then at another, she exclaimed, '*Well!*' Mr. Kendal remarked, 'What does it mean?' Mr. Cecil observed, 'That's funny!' to which Mr. Bancroft replied quietly, 'I don't see where the *fun* comes in—it's deuced puzzling!' There they all stood, just as the curtain had closed them in, with an expression of blank wonder on every face—*sans* applause, *sans* call, *sans* everything! Eventually Mr. Bancroft followed me to my room, and asked me what I thought. Was it a failure? The comedy went well throughout until the very end—then utter silence! What could it

forebode? After several conjectures, and many a long pause to reflect, he took up my tumbler of lemon and water, emptied it, and retired to his own room, leaving me minus my constant beverage during my work.

How little an audience knows what power it possesses! and how frequently it can deprive a manager of a night's rest—nay, *several!*

This remarkable occurrence was the topic of our conversation all the next day; but our hearts were made easy by the good old comedy proving a great success until the end of the season, and Mrs. Kendal fairly revelled in the character of Lady Gay.

With regard to my own share in *London Assurance*, I fear that in the second act, to which the appearance of the small part of Pert is limited, I ran riot in the desire to augment its value. Pert is a smart lady's-maid who has but a very short scene, but which in the course of a few nights played double the time intended by the author, and I don't know what he would have said to the liberties taken with the text. The audience, however, laughed immoderately, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy it, so I must include them in my conspiracy. I well remember one night Mrs. Boucicault, who occupied a private box, was looking with amazement at my audacity, but at the same time laughing heartily.

The following paragraph in my own words, concerning *The Vicarage*, will not be without interest:

'When I played the Vicar's wife I had to deliver a particular speech which always affected me deeply —"God gave me a little child; but then, when all was bright and beautiful, God took His gift away," etc. The remembrance of the death of my own child was revived in these words. My mind was full of his image, and my tears came in tribute to his memory. I could not have stopped them if I had tried. The effect upon my audience was that not a heart amongst them did not feel with me. Their silence spoke volumes, and their tears told me of their sympathy.'

Spontaneous criticisms from fellow-workers are always delightful in every art, as was this kind expression from a veteran tragedian:

'Garrick Club,
*May* 3, 1877.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

'Pray do me the favour to accept an old actor's warmest felicitations on your beautiful rendition of the parson's wife in *The Vicarage*. A more perfect bit of quiet acting I have never witnessed. You must believe me sincere when I tell you it moved me even to tears—the delicate harmony of comedy and pathos awakened me to surprise and admiration. Having gratified my love for legitimate acting so much, you will not, I trust, refuse to accept the sincere and appreciative thanks of

'Yours very faithfully,
'JAMES ANDERSON.'

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

In the spring of this year, on an evening passed at Lady Sebright's, we first met a lady whose name was destined soon to be known throughout the world—Mrs. Langtry. It may be interesting to recall my first impressions of one who leaped at a bound into extraordinary celebrity. I had lingered after dinner talking to a friend, not knowing that more people were coming later, and when I went upstairs again, Mrs. Langtry was standing in the middle of the drawing-room, very plainly dressed in black—one of a small group of people. I exclaimed at once to my companion, 'Who is that lovely woman?' We asked a generally well-informed man, who said, 'I am told she is a Mrs. Langworthy, or Lang—something; and that her father is the Dean of Jersey.' Mrs. Langtry, I believe, had been brought by one of Lord Ranelagh's daughters, now married to her brother, Mr. Le Breton, who practises at the English bar. After awhile I was presented by our hostess, and found the manner of this since celebrated woman as full of charm as were her looks. Later on, at Lord Houghton's and several other houses, we again met. Mrs. Langtry then was famous, with all the London world running at her heels; but this charm of manner never changed—a charm, it always seemed to me, as potent as her beauty.

The tide of success, which at this time remained unbroken, followed our new programme, and continued throughout the season, towards the end of

which we resolved when we reopened in the autumn to play Tom Taylor's comedy, *An Unequal Match*, in conjunction with *To Parents and Guardians*, while the new Sardou play was being finally prepared. Although I was told by many good judges, including the late well-known musical critic of the *Athenæum*, Mr. C. L. Gruneisen, that *Dora* could not possibly be made successful in her English dress (Gruneisen adding that the only chance would be to set the play back to the Jacobite period), my faith remained unshaken, and I grew more and more anxious to get to work upon the venture. I am not a betting-man, but backed my judgment on this occasion to the price of several hats!

This was to both of us a year of much social enjoyment and the making of new friends, adding largely to the list of those who had made their names familiar to the world: to have known distinguished and eminent people is not the least of the many debts we owe to our work and to the stage. There needs no further allusion here, excepting, perhaps, to mention for the moment, as he follows the same calling as ourselves, delightful meetings—sometimes at our own table, sometimes in picnics on the Thames, which he dearly loved—with that accomplished actor and companionable friend Joseph Jefferson, of whom we hope to speak again.

As the season drew to an end, the mornings were occupied with rehearsals of *An Unequal Match*, which Tom Taylor read to the company, the play

being somewhat altered from the printed book. As usual then, we closed the theatre on the first Friday in August, and on the following morning, without losing a single day, we started for the mountains.

A 'DRAMATIC CONTRAST' BY MRS. BANCROFT.

As soon as I got on board the boat for Calais, feeling a breeze, I asked the usual question, 'What sort of a crossing shall we have?' On being informed, 'Oh, a beautiful crossing; a bit "lumpy," perhaps, mum, after yesterday's storm,' all those poor creatures (I am one of them) who suffer more or less from *mal de mer*, immediately prepared themselves for a private cabin, or a couch in the Chamber of Horrors, otherwise the ladies' saloon. Of course I was assured that the fresh air was safer for me; but as all the cabins were taken, I urged that, much as I disliked it, I would go downstairs, 'for,' I added, 'I do not look my best when I'm ill.' We had noticed, when we embarked, a very pretty girl with a tall good-looking man, who was most attentive to her, watching her affectionately, like a faithful dog. We remarked aside, 'A newly married couple!' The bride was conscious of being observed, for many eyes were gazing at her; she seemed abashed, and almost inclined to apologize for getting married. I had secured my couch, and was resigned to a 'lumpy crossing,' for we had no sooner started than the boat began to roll and pitch, and I felt thankful that I had wisely prepared for the worst. Presently down came the little bride, followed by her

young husband, who anxiously asked the stewardess if 'his wife' could have a couch. 'Certainly,' was the reply, as she pointed to one on the opposite side to mine. The bride sat down, and the husband cheered her with assurances that she would not be ill. 'Now, dearest pet, make up your mind that you are *not* going to be ill, and you *won't*. Your Regy will run down every now and then to have a peep at you.' Then, turning to the stewardess, he said, 'Kindly look after "my wife," won't you?' 'Certainly, sir.' After a little whispering close enough to the ear to slyly kiss it, and a pause on the steps to throw a long, tender glance at 'his wife' before leaving her, he went away. In a few moments the newly-made wife called the stewardess, and asked whether she might occupy a couch she saw vacant on my side of the saloon, which she thought preferable to her own. She was conducted to it, at once closed her eyes, and prepared for sleep. Soon afterwards a middle-aged lady, and somewhat plain, came down. She was shown to the sofa just vacated by the bride, and lay down immediately, covering herself with a travelling-cloak which chanced to be similar to that worn by the other lady. In about half an hour the bridegroom crept carefully down the steps, as if he had no right there, to have a peep at his brand-new wife. Seeing that all was tranquil and the stewardess idle, he retired noiselessly. The middle-aged lady had turned her face to the wall, and was asleep. By-and-by

'Regy' returned, and ventured closer to the couch. He sat down, and said in the softest tones, 'Is my pet one all right? she *has* been a brave girl indeed! We shall soon be there, darling. Courage, little one! your *husband* is here!' Then he took out of a lovely new travelling-bag a bottle of eau-de-Cologne and sprinkled her wrap with it, filling the close atmosphere with delicious perfume, at the same time saying encouragingly, 'Soon there now, dearie—soon there now. Who said she would be ill? Brave little wife! and who loves his little girl, eh?' Then more eau-de-Cologne, some of which must have gone into the poor lady's eyes, for she woke with a start and sat bolt upright. When 'Regy' saw her face, he dropped the bottle and bolted up the steps as fast as he could run, stumbling over the brass-bound edges of them on his way. (I would have given worlds to have laughed outright, but I dared not move—I was not good sailor enough!) A sudden cessation of the ship's bad behaviour told us we were near the end of our journey, and the ladies began to make a move to collect their things.

The bewildered young husband ventured cautiously down again, looking anxiously about for his wife, and seeing her seated on the opposite side, went over to her, but not without casting an abashed and uneasy glance at the middle-aged lady. I heard an explanation going on between the just-wedded pair, and the young bride crossed to where the other poor lady was sitting to recover her eau-de-Cologne.

She apologized for her husband's behaviour, upon which the middle-aged lady remarked, 'Oh, not at all, not at all! I was asleep until your husband spoke, but when I heard his words, I knew it was a mistake, for it is many years since my husband has spoken like that to me.' There was pathos in this.

When we got on deck, we found ourselves in harbour. We were much crowded, and while waiting at the gangway I heard the young husband say in an undertone, 'Was my pretty flower ill? Did the little wifie suffer at all?' At the same moment the gruff, brusque, harsh voice of the other lady's husband said in a loud tone, 'Were you sick, Eliza?' During our journey these new and old married couples must have fraternized, for when we got out at Brussels we saw them, all four, dining together. Afterwards the two ladies went for a little stroll in the town, having still time at their disposal. They lingered too long, however, and the husbands became, one extremely anxious, and the other wild with impatience; the one in terror of 'anything having happened to the darling wifie,' the other stamping with rage and muttering, 'Oh, these women and their infernal shops!' Presently there was a general commotion, and travellers were taking their seats—still no sign of the two ladies. The husbands rushed up and down the platform, asking everybody if the wives had been seen. 'En voiture!' cried the guard. Where on earth can they be? At length the ladies

appeared in the distance running like mad. The bells rang, the engine whistled, and all was bustle and confusion. The bridegroom assisted his young wife tenderly into the carriage, saying, 'Oh, my angel! where were you?' The older married man angrily exclaimed, as he hoisted his middle-aged wife up the steps with a tremendous push, sending her parcels flying before her, 'Where the devil have you been, Eliza?'

BY S. B. B.

It was in this year that we first went to the Engadine, and commenced our great attachment for the beautiful valley. We rested on our way at Coire, and there engaged an excellent carriage and friendly coachman to go in two easy days to Pontresina by the Albula Pass. Needless to dwell on the ever-changing beauties of the drive, which year by year grow more and more familiar to the traveller; needless to tell of the grandeur of the Bergünerstein, or how, soon afterwards, fertility changes to sterility as the zigzags decrease, and the barren summit of the pass is slowly reached—a strangely weird and desolate waste that might have suggested many a background to Gustave Doré, and seemed fit only to be peopled by the creatures of his great imagination. We stayed a brief month at Pontresina, and soon learned to love the simple little village which slumbers in the valley of the Inn, six thousand feet above the sea. The wonderful restorative effect of its pure dry air upon those whom it suits, alone would make

hard-worked or brain-worn people grateful to it. We had now a little extended the length of our holiday, closing the theatre for eight weeks; this gave us time for a short run to the Tyrol. We drove in four days to Botzen: on the first to Tirano, then to the Baths of Bormio, from which resting-place, on the next day, Mrs. Bancroft accomplished the feat of walking to the summit of the wonderful Stelvio Pass, the highest considerably in Europe. We then drove to a rough halting-place called Spondinig, and as we descended the pass, our coachman pointed out the spot made famous by the recent De Tourville trial for murder. On the fourth day we rested for lunch at Meran—a most picturesque town, reminding one greatly of 'The Rows,' as they call the arcades at Chester, and greatly frequented for the grape-cure — and in the evening arrived at Botzen, where the church-bells seem to never cease from ringing. At our hotel we had an amusing meeting with Mr. David James, who, having been on a walking tour, had grown a heavy dark beard, which greatly changed his appearance, and enabled him to maintain a joke at our doubts as to his identity. Later on we walked to the gaol where De Tourville was waiting his sentence, and the prisoner was pointed out to us taking exercise, while guarded, up and down a room. Then we bought grapes as big as walnuts, and melons fit for prizes, at a cost of very small coins in the pretty market-place.

We left the quaint old place by train over the Brenner Pass for Innsbruck. It was a year of heavy floods, and rumours had reached us that the line had been blocked through landslips caused by the torrents. After careful inquiry at the station, we were told we could safely make the journey, and that the rails were clear. This was a deliberate misstatement, as we found to our cost at noon, when the train was brought to a halt at a little village called—its name, indeed, is a sort of Calais on our hearts—Gossensass. There we learnt that gangs of men were working on the blocked line to remove the vast masses of earth which stopped the way for more than three parts of a mile, where the engineering qualities of the railway were most remarkable. We were told we should very likely be detained two hours, so soon we thought it best to storm the village inn, and see what could be done in the way of food, all that we had with us of the kind being a solitary melon, the remnant of our marketing at Botzen. It turned out to be a fête-day, picturesque to see, but terrible to us in its results, for hunger in its most ravenous form must have beset the natives, whose early dinner, aided by the passengers of a train blocked before the one we travelled by, had simply cleared the village larders, and left nothing eatable to be got for love or money. For a time this mattered little, but as the day wore on and our delay was hour after hour prolonged (while further trains were imprisoned in our rear), the pangs of hunger asserted themselves, and added

to our sufferings. The stationmaster was so besieged, and found himself so unable to answer the shoals of questions by which he was assailed, that at last, in despair, he destroyed his identity by removing his tell-tale red cap. After all, we were travelling for our pleasure, and the inconveniences we put up with were small indeed compared with the anguish we saw endured by a traveller who had been summoned by telegraph from Vienna to a sick-bed; the despair of a commercial person at some important difference the delay would cause in his affairs; and the moans and cries of starving animals and fowls, packed in trucks or cooped in pens, regardless of all humanity, but stacked like sandwiches, and now without food, or drink, or standing space, but crowded on each other, and fighting in the heat for every inch of breathing-room. In answer to their appealing looks, all we could do was to give the wretched birds the rind of the melon we had just eaten. This miserable offering provoked a sudden flutter of excitement, which in their eagerness caused the poor suffering things to be all mixed up in a distorted way, that would have been funny under other circumstances.

For more than seven hours were we thus kept at Gossensass. Darkness had fallen, and with it heavy rain, until at last we began to think how best we could get through the night. We were fortunate in the fellow-occupants of our compartment, a French *pasteur* and his two daughters, who were also going on

to Innsbruck, when, to our relief, the word came down the Pass—the accident having befallen us at the steepest incline of this wonderful piece of railway—that it was cleared enough for trains on our side to ascend a little, while the blocked trains on the other side came down. When this was done the wretched passengers, travel-worn and weary, were transferred on foot, climbing as best they could by the light of lanterns and of torches for a distance of some hundreds of yards, and in the drenching thunder-storm, over the fallen *débris*, the luggage being dragged over the big boulders of rock and mounds of earth by the gangs of labourers, who looked like devils by the torchlight, grimed as they were with dirt, having been throughout the day and the past night at work to clear the way. The task was not an easy one, but was in time safely accomplished. The trains from the Austrian side, when reladen, returned to their starting-point, and *vice versâ* with those that met them from the contrary direction. The fate of the wretched cattle in the trucks and the cooped-up fowls we never knew, but Time does not efface our remembrance of this journey. When at last we reached the train for Innsbruck, we hoped our woes were over ; but we had not long started, when we halted in a tunnel. There was an appalling silence for a time ; presently we learnt that we had left half our train behind us, and the engine in the rear had gone to pick it up. Afterwards we must have slept from sheer exhaustion ; for we remember nothing,

until cries reached us of 'Innsbruck! Innsbruck!' when we felt, 'No, no! there *is* no Innsbruck, there never *was* an Innsbruck, there never *will be* an Innsbruck!' At one a.m., however, we did find ourselves—wet, tired out, and almost past hunger, but very thankful for our safety—in the Tirolerhof.

Of course during our brief stay we went to the old Franciscan Church, and saw the bronze monuments of Maximilian and the kings and queens surrounding him. We also drove to the famous Schloss all tourists go to see, but whether to our unlucky journey may be attributed our want of appreciation of the picturesque old town, we don't know; certain it is we were glad to leave it after a short two days and go on to Salzburg. An incident with the *portier* of our hotel concerning our departure seemed to us amusing. In answer to a question as to how long it would take to get to Salzburg, he replied, 'Four hours was the former time, but that a new line of railway had just been opened by which we should be able to travel.' 'And how long by that?' 'Seven hours and a half!' Further inquiries informed us that the longer journey was passed through more beautiful scenery than the old line traversed, and the *portier* thought us poor creatures indeed when we decided to be contented with the beaten track and run no further risk of landslips.

Pleasant days followed at the Hôtel de l'Europe, Salzburg, surely as prettily placed as any town or city need be. There we came across friends, and

with them went down the salt-mines of Berchtesgaden. The experience was then a strange one—very likely now more cockneyfied, through the vast increase of tourists. Crossing the subterranean lake, with its faint glimmer of light just revealing the forms of shadowy-looking creatures who rowed the boat, could not fail to call up mental pictures of the Styx. We then drove on to the lovely Königs-See, and when afterwards we told Count Beust how near we had been to his villa above its deep-green waters, he kindly regretted that we had not sought his hospitality. A long journey, with the rest of sleeping-cars, took us straight to Paris, for we had not time to linger at either Munich or Strasburg; and after 'doing' two or three theatres, including the Français, where we saw Dumas' *Demi Monde*, and Favart's superb acting in Octave Feuillet's unpleasant play *Julie*, we were again at work upon our own little stage.

Our experiences at the salt-mines were thus related in a letter written by Mrs. Bancroft:

'Hôtel de l'Europe, Salzburg,
*Tuesday* (*September*, 1877).

'My dear ——,

'We have been very like children during this holiday trip, so keen was our desire to see everything and to do everything. When we were told it was usual for visitors to pass under a waterfall, never mind the wetting, we must do it. We drove with the —— to Berchtesgaden, and went with them down the shaft some hundreds of feet below the

earth, the sensation being as if we were sent flying to the lower regions, which were represented by the salt-mines. After we had crossed a black, silent lake, the border of which was feebly lit by faint glimmering oil-lamps, we mounted on a kind of wooden plank on wheels at the mouth of a long black tunnel, with a small bright star at the other end, which we were told was daylight, and through which we should pass into our own civilized world again. The ceremony we had to go through, and the costumes we were obliged to don before we could be admitted into the bowels of the earth, caused me much amusement (for the ludicrous side of things, if there is one at all, I am sure to detect). We were shown into separate apartments, where attendants were waiting to dress us. Our costumes were as follows: For the men, a suit of white linen over their own, a felt hat, and a leather apron, only not worn as one, as there were many shafts to descend quickly in a sitting position!

'The ladies wore a white linen jacket, very full trousers, to allow one's own dress to be tucked inside; a leather belt and small felt hat, with no brim, of saucepan shape. These linen suits are worn to prevent the salt from penetrating through one's clothes. This is all right enough when the lady's figure is slight, but when it happens to be somewhat corpulent, the effect under these circumstances is too comic. When we all emerged to cross the road in open daylight, for the purpose of entering the mouth

of the pit, a lady, whose dimensions were, to say the least, bulky, made her appearance. The effect on me was instantaneous, and I laughed till I suffered positive pain. I was obliged to make her think that I was amused at the general effect, and not at her in particular, or the explanation might have been a little unpleasant. But every time my eyes met her large presence, I could not resist laughing. While we were in the dark cavern of the earth, lit only by the dim lanterns which were carried by our guides, I, of course, was unable to see her distinctly, but I always knew when she was near, and could picture her in "my mind's eye." When we emerged again into daylight (covered thickly with salt—in fact, human beings well pickled), this female Falstaff met my gaze once more, and I went off again into such an ungovernable fit of laughter that I was pushed into my dressing-room, where I could give vent to it to my heart's content. I enclose a rough sketch of the lady's appearance.

'I shall write again from Paris.

'Yours ever,

'M. E. B.'

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SEASON OF 1877-78.

EMBOLDENED by continued prosperity, as well as by friendly rivalry in management, to which for years we had been strangers, when, without disciples, we remained for so long a time in almost undisturbed possession of the field, we made still further engagements for this season, resolving, when it was no longer possible—through a greatly increasing *demand* by the side of which *supply* by no means ran at the same pace—to keep our company so much unchanged as in our earlier days, at least to replace any valued members of it, whose services we might lose, regardless of cost to our treasury. The salary list became, in fact, for so small a theatre, remarkable; the little house, however, seemed to bear a charmed life, as we were legislating only for success.

Prince of Wales's Royal Theatre.—Lessees and Managers, Mr.* and Mrs. Bancroft.—Season 1877-78. —Mr. Kendal, Mr. John Clayton, Mr. Sugden, Mr.

* This was the first time my name appeared in the play-bills in this capacity, as, for a long time, we shared Joey Ladle's objection to 'change the name of the firm.'—S. B. B.

Kemble, Mr. Flockton, Mr. Teesdale, Mr. W. Younge, Mr. Deane, Mr. Newton, Mr. C. Strick, Mr. Arthur Cecil, and Mr. Bancroft; Mrs. Kendal, Miss Litton, Miss Le Thiere, Miss Kate Phillips, Miss Lamartine, Miss A. Wilton, Miss Ida Hertz, Miss Lee, and Mrs. Bancroft.

Although our company comprised this strong list of names, we had further opportunities of adding to it, as the following amusing applications will show:

'HONNERED LADY

'i was borne in allen Street and i am now pottman at the swan with 2 neks i have no art to continue in my persision so i writ to arsk you to putt me on the bords of your theatre i am a borne actor for I citch myself makeing speaches out of plays in the middel of the nite if you will give me the charnce I will do my duty well and be a creditt to your theater if you see your way to give me the charnce i must arsk you to say nothink of it to my famly yours truly humble servent

'HENRY ———.'

'to Mr Bangkroft

'DEAR SIR

'could you be so kind as to teake noites of Ellen ———'s letter wich i took the libty of writing asking you if you could for kindly infrom har How she Could become a Balled gril as i have a longing

disire to become one hopeing you will excuse the libty of troubilleng you i remaine your obedint

'Servent

'ELLEN ———.

'wery tall age 19.'

'DEAR LADY,

'I hope you will pardon me for troubling you but if "you" will kindly read what "I" have got to say; you will perhaps, think, that I am justified in writing. I am twenty-two years of age, and have been for a considerable time studying for the stage. I am not merely stage struck; but possess those qualifications which must inevitably raise me to its highest "step"; which is "that" of expressing extreme passion. I have applied to several theatre's but all in vain. But I sincerely hope that you will not follow their example, and "also" help to rescue me from the poverty and insult to which I have been exposed these last few year's. I have not been accustomed to an audience, therefore I should like a few subordinate character's till I regain confidence, once more I ask you kindly to do what I ask and you will be repaid in a manner you little dream of.

'I am yours

'JOHN ———.'

'SIR,

'Pleese pardon me for taking the liberty but it is on account of myself wishing to be an Actress I feel I never shall be happy untill I am one and I can assure you I will not be long lerning what I have to lern.

I can jump about, but I am only just beginning to lern dancing, they tell me I am like a frog jumping about I am 17 years old and big for my age when I was 15 I played with other girls at pretending to be circus girls I can sing pretty well this writing look something dreadful but I am writing it at work and I am in a hurry your Respec[ly]

'ETHEL ———.'

'SIR,

'I am a young man age 20 my hight is 5ft 7in light weight (Excuse the term please) very good looking and Nimble should like to get into your theatre I have a good strong Voice and a distinct plain and good pronyunciation Quick at learning parts I will Agree to any propisition you make I have friends of position in various parts of England shall do my Best to please you all I ask in Return is to have an allowance just for the necessaries and would like to live on premises but be content with a Small room in the vicinity I beg the honour of Being yours

'obediently

'MR. FRANK ———.

'My dear sir I am of Course single do not Smoke or drink.'

'DEER SIR

'I have a grate desire to becume An actorist I have not Been on the stage before But ive allways wished to becume one I have Nither Father nor Mother I

have too brothers that all the frends i have so I am in the world allone So if you or any one would take me I should be extreamly thankfull i have been in sirvice but its no good its seems if ive been made for the stage its allways in my hed and I am sure I would soon be a good actorist I went to the Princess and the door Keeper He told me to write to any of the mangers Sir i am not a Londer but yorkshire Girl i was 16 years old Last febuary

'i remain
'yours
'Respetfully
'M—— N——
'— hamstedd
'Road
'N.V.'

The hopes we entertained that the dramatic profession had somewhat risen in public esteem were a little dashed when we found they evidently were not shared by the 'famly' of the gentleman who was 'borne in allen Street,' to whom we did not 'see our way' to 'give the charnce' of appearing in the programme of Saturday, September 29th, 1877, when Tom Taylor's comedy, *An Unequal Match*, was first acted by us with this cast:

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR SOWERBY HONEYWOOD | Mr. Kemble. |
| HARRY ARNCLIFFE | Mr. Sugden. |
| CAPTAIN CHILLINGHAM | Mr. C. Strick. |
| DR. BOTCHERBY | Mr. Arthur Cecil. |
| JOHN GRAZEBROOK | Mr. Flockton. |
| BLENKINSOP | Mr. Bancroft. |

| | |
|---|---|
| TOFTS | MR. W. YOUNGE. |
| HERR DUMMKOPF | MR. DEANE. |
| LADY HONEYWOOD | MISS IDA HERTZ. |
| MRS. MONTRESSOR | MISS LITTON. |
| MISS LEECH | MISS LEE. |
| BESSY HEBBLETHWAITE | MISS KATE PHILLIPS. |
| HESTER GRAZEBROOK | MRS. BANCROFT. |

The play not only added a considerable sum to the treasury, but ran pleasantly until the end of the year, and throughout the preparation of Sardou's new work, which was definitely announced for production in January, until which date the Kendals could not rejoin us. The old farce, first made famous by Alfred Wigan and the Keeleys, *To Parents and Guardians*, the action of which Tom Taylor reduced at our suggestion, and with great advantage he considered, to a single scene, proved an excellent afterpiece. It gave Arthur Cecil an admirable part in the old French usher, while Henry Kemble quite revelled in the boyish troubles of the fat butt of the school, known to his playmates as Master William Waddilove.

It was at this time that Mr. Jefferson, who, had he not been so distinguished as an actor, might easily have made painting his profession—his pictures having been more than once shown in the Academy—gave us a charming souvenir from his brush of some happy days we had passed together, chiefly on the river, and often in the additional companionship of William Winter, an accomplished poet and critic, and also a fellow-countryman of his. The subject is a backwater on the Thames in the early haze—

the *genre* being greatly that of the eminent French landscape painter, Corot.

Jefferson had lingered in the old country long after his engagements here were over, for he loved England and its people, and now was going home. The following letter was an answer to a wish that he would add, if possible, to the value we set upon his gift by writing his name on the canvas, which is quite important in size, although so modestly spoken of by himself:

'BRIGHTON,
'*Thursday, September* 27, 1877.

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

'I was sorry to find yourself and Bancroft from home when I called on Monday with the little sketch of the Thames. I am glad you like it.

'Many thanks for your kind and beautiful letter. I shall be in London on Sunday, and will call for the purpose of wishing you both good-bye, and to sign the picture as you request.

'Mrs. Jefferson joins me in love to you both, and we hope some day to see you in America.

'Always your friend and admirer,

'J. JEFFERSON.'

No man was ever more gifted with a poetic temperament than Jefferson. He loved nature. To linger on an old bridge, or wander in a country lane, would give him hours of happiness. Every leaf had its charm in his eyes, each blade of grass he would, as it were, photograph on his memory, parting with

them regretfully, so 'loving-jealous' was he of their beauties. Once, after a long ramble near Cookham, he said, 'What a beautiful place is your bonnie England! How I should like to take it in my arms and carry it right away!' He was as popular in society as on the stage, and always charming in companionship.

A little story he told us of periodical visits to a certain theatre in his own country, either by himself or some other distinguished actor, we thought very touching in its simplicity. At this theatre the actor had for years taken some friendly notice of an old stage carpenter and scene-shifter named Jackson, whose life had interested him, and who always got some substantial recognition when the engagement ended. This went on for years, when, on one occasion, the kind comedian looked about for the old man in vain. He searched the theatre well, but could not find him; so at last he sent for the master-carpenter, and asked him where Jackson was. The man first answered the question with a sorrowful look, then simply pointing upwards, said quietly, 'I guess he's *shifting clouds*.'

It is impossible to recall more exquisite acting than Jefferson's in the character of dear, dissolute, gentle Rip Van Winkle. When this finished work of art first caused its sensation at the Adelphi, a solemn-looking man who was seated in the upper boxes read from his play-bill in an audible voice, 'Twenty years will elapse between the acts.' He

then rose, took up his hat, and, bowing to his neighbour, said quietly, 'Sir, I wish you good-evening. Few present, I take it, will survive to see the end of this play.'

We wonder if America will lend its great artist to us again. We hope so, for few friendships are more valued by us than that of Joseph Jefferson.

Sardou's play had meantime fully occupied both us and the 'Brothers Rowe,' as they were called; it was revised and revised, but at last approached completion. Only a careful comparison of the original manuscript with the English version would prove the labour it involved, and the tact and skill it required to retain just what was necessary from the French second act and incorporate it with the first. When the play was read to the company, each adaptor in turn taking an act, it produced a profound impression on everyone present. One lady, who was cast for a small part, when asked if she was interested in the story, replied, 'Interested! if anybody had spoken to me, I must have slapped their faces!' Then there arose a tantalizing difficulty as to its title. Our dear friend Charles Reade reminded us of the existence of his play *Dora*, founded on Tennyson's poem, thinking if we retained the name that a wide field would be opened to pirates. We first decided to christen it *Blackmail*, but when we so advertised it, claim was laid to the title as belonging to an unacted play by the late Watts

Phillips, who wrote so many admirable dramas for the Adelphi. We next thought, apropos of the last act, of the *Mousetrap*, again to find that some one had been beforehand ; eventually all the titles thought of were, one night at home, written on slips of paper and put into a hat. We decided that the one drawn oftenest in a given time should be resolved on. This chanced to be *Diplomacy*, which came out a long way ahead, and best of all, perhaps, fitted to the line we adopted in the play. The hero, a young sailor in the French, had become our military *attaché* at Vienna, while his brother (there was no kinship between these characters as Sardou left them) was to be First Secretary in our Embassy at Paris. Accident served us very much with regard to the political relations between Russia and Turkey at the time, and the question of the Constantinople defences was a prominent one of the day. The scenes at Monte Carlo and Paris were elaborately prepared and decorated, although, we frankly admit, not so elaborately as to allow truth in the rumour that one suite of furniture had in the days of the Empress Eugénie formerly graced her boudoir in the Tuileries. Our desire for realism in the last act, which we laid in the *Chancellerie* of the British Embassy, induced a special visit to Paris for final details, for which every opportunity was given to us through the kindness of Mr. (now Sir Francis) Adams, who was then First Secretary, and our old friend George Greville, who, since we knew him as a boy at Scarborough,

had entered the diplomatic service, and had become an *attaché* under Lord Lyons.

The rehearsals proceeded apace, and nothing in our career we thought more clearly foreshadowed success—a view which was strongly confirmed by our friend Mr. Pigott when he sent us the Lord Chamberlain's license for its performance.

DIPLOMATIC NOTES FROM S. B. B.'S DESPATCH-BOX.

In the first days of the new year, about a week before the play came out, I received a visit at the theatre from Mr. Ollier, one of the leading librarians in Bond Street, who said he wished to make a proposal with regard to the new production. Perhaps the interview that followed can be best related in dialogue; which certainly shall reproduce its exact purport, if not the actual words of the conversation.

Mr. OLLIER: 'You have now over a hundred and twenty stalls in the theatre, Mr. Bancroft.'

Mr. BANCROFT: 'Yes.'

Mr. O.: 'The charge for which at your booking-office is ten shillings?'

Mr. B.: 'Yes.'

Mr. O.: 'Let us count them as a hundred and twenty, which, at ten shillings each, would be sixty pounds a night, if all of them were taken.'

Mr. B.: 'Exactly.'

Mr. O.: 'Sixty pounds a night is at the rate of three hundred and sixty pounds a week for six performances.

Mr. B.: 'I follow you.'

Mr. O.: 'Well, Mr. Bancroft, from the night you produce *Diplomacy* until the middle of July will be about five-and-twenty weeks.'

Mr. B.: 'Yes, I think so.

Mr. O.: 'Three hundred and sixty pounds a week for five-and-twenty weeks would be nine thousand pounds.'

Mr. B.: 'I don't know—haven't counted—but what are you coming to?'

Mr. O.: 'This. I am prepared to take every stall in the theatre, at its full price, for six months, and to write you a cheque for the whole sum at this moment.'

Mr. B. (*after a pause*): 'You rather take my breath away, Mr. Ollier; but will you let me ask what prompts you to make such an extraordinary proposal?'

Mr. O.: 'Certainly. I have a great opinion of your judgment, and am simply prepared to back it. I can't recall a cast of any modern production with six such names as Mrs. Bancroft's and your own, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. Arthur Cecil, and Mr. Clayton. Added to which I know the play drew money in Paris, and I feel sure you know what you are doing.'

Mr. B.: 'I am, of course, very much complimented, believe me, by your proposal, and by what you say of me. I can do nothing, however, it seems to me, but thank you for the offer, and decline it.'

Mr O.: 'Decline it! Why?'

Mr. B.: 'For one good reason. If the play should succeed, as you expect, you would have a monopoly of the stalls, and could put them at any price you like, leaving Mrs. Bancroft and myself to bear the natural anger of the public.'

Mr. O.: 'Well, Mr. Bancroft, I am sure you know your own business best; but I don't think in a long career I have met another manager who would have refused the offer. Anyhow, I wish you all the success you work so hard for, and many a long year of it. Good-night!'

Mr. B.: 'Good-night!'

The Friday night was devoted to a last rehearsal, which was considerably enlivened by Arthur Cecil, pursued as usual by his second self the Demon of Indecision, appearing in each of his scenes with a totally distinct 'make-up' for Baron Stein, and looking like some new character dragged into the play at the last moment, who was going to brighten it up by giving a sort of entertainment *à la Woodin*.

Some very clever verses by Edmund Yates, which must have been written on the night the play was produced, or certainly not later than the following day, for they appeared immediately after in *The World*, will revive memories as to who were among the prominent 'first-nighters' then.

A *PREMIÈRE* AT THE PRINCE OF WALES'S.

Toss off your *chasse*, the hansom's here, no longer will I wait,
'Tis Mrs. Bancroft's earnest hope that we'll be there by eight;
Adjust your curls, your linen shoot, your coat wide open fling,
And show the single opal stud you justly deem 'the thing.'

Ho, cabman, urge your spavined steed along the miry way ;
*Cesarem vehis !* such a swell you're taking to the play !
The Bart. who holds manorial rule among the Yorkshire tykes,
Where they name the pastures 'spinneys,' where they call the ditches 'dykes,'
Where they—never mind ! the cabman knows, and, as we his fare disgorge,
Touches his hat, and says, 'I 'ope you 'ave your 'ealth, Sir George !'

What is the piece ? *Diplomacy ;* adapted by the Rowes
From *Dora*, Sardou's last success, as everybody knows :
Under the rose the Rowes are merely *noms de plume ;* all wot
That 'Bolton's' Charley Stephenson, while 'Saville's' Clement Scott.
Their partnership's successful, too, in spite of cynics' snarls,
For careful Clement polishes the rough work done by Charles ;
While Charley modifies the tropes which Clement turns with ease—
He's sat at Edwin Arnold's feet, and writes Telegraphese.

The curtain's down as yet ; and while around the house we look,
Familiar faces are discerned in every hole and nook :
A bed of beauty seem the stalls just bursting on our view,
With hardy annuals in the pit, and flowers in boxes, too.
Here grave and silent Londesborough, his Countess[1] at his side,
Looks calmly on, nor speaks nor smiles, or good or ill betide ;
And here is one who left us when her art was in its prime,[2]
Who still has many a kindly thought for that once happy time,
And seems with eyes and lips to say, 'You think she plays it well ?
I'd show her how, were I once more K. T., and not K. L.'

Sterry, the pet of pantalettes, the laureate of frills,
To Lewis Wingfield's eager ear his honeyed words instills ;
These Greenroom twins, with jokes and grins, are never separate found,
And Sterry 'Tiny Travels' makes o'er Wingfield's 'Slippery Ground ;'
Their next stall neighbour looks askance—ah, Reade,[3] my good old friend,
I wish you'd prove that, in your health, 'tis ne'er too late to mend.
Here's Wilkie, full of pluck again, though crippled with the gout ;
And Palgrave[4] 'Lud-a-mussy,' how he *has* been put about !
And here the two dramatic Barts. who countenance the stage,
Sir Shelley and Sir Seton ; but where—where's Sir Armytage ?

[1] This was prophetic.
[2] Mrs. Arthur Lewis, *née* Kate Terry.
[3] Charles Reade—*dead.*
[4] J. Palgrave Simpson—*dead.*

Here's Henry Lennox,[1] sad as one whose heart his own no more is ;
And Henry Calcraft, laden with the latest social stories ;
And Harry Wombwell—'Joan of Arc' I vote henceforth his name is,
From what he's 'made of Orleans' his fortune and his fame is.

Welcome, my Lord of Dorchester! in clubs although the rage,
You've scarce, I think, devoted your attention to the stage?
We know you, though, from hearsay—know the judgment and the skill
That, appealed to *in extremis*, have stopped many a threatened 'mill ;'
No 'side,' no pride, no turn of tide, have come with higher grade—
The friendships Dorchester sustains which Dudley Carleton made.
Here's 'Bunny' Sturt—Lord Alington, I mean—come up from Crichel;
But Napier's[2] absent ; not a stall could be obtained from Mitchell.
Here's handsome Harry Romeo,[3] and there's the Colleen Bawn,[4]
And there is, too, dear Ned Pellew,[5] as agile as a fawn.

By Herman's[6] side there sits a bride, although not his, I ween,
Whose heart goes fluttering wildly when our genial Jack is seen.[7]
Here is Ottiwell[8] from Paris, with his *pince-nez* on his nose,
And Wybrow,[9] bearing ne'er a trace of Labby's[10] stinging blows ;
And Donoughmore,[11] who don't know more than what he can desire,
And sits happily unconscious that his drawing-room flue's on fire.
Here's Pigott, Hertford's deputy, the licenser of plays,
And Critchett,[12] whom we visit when our eyes look different ways.
Here's Gilbert, overflowing with all human kindness' milk ;
And Montagu,[13] who rumour says will speedily 'take silk ;'
And here is George from Ely Place, the man of brain and 'nous,'
Who knows enough to hang full half the people in the house.
Here's Holmes[14] from Harrow ; here's—but stop, there goes the prompter's bell,
And now we'll listen to the tale the Rowes have got to tell.

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[1] Lord Henry Lennox—*dead.*
[2] Colonel Napier Sturt—*dead.*
[3] Mr. H. B. Conway.
[4] Mrs. Boucicault.
[5] Mr. E. F. Pellew—*dead.*
[6] Mr. Herman Merivale.
[7] Mrs. John Clayton.
[8] Sir F. Ottiwell Adams, then First Secretary of the English Embassy in Paris.
[9] [10] The *fracas* between Mr. Wybrow Robertson and Mr. Labouchere will be remembered.
[11] Lord Donoughmore's drawing-room chimney caught fire while he was at this performance.
[12] Mr. Critchett, the eminent oculist—*dead.*
[13] Mr. Montagu Williams, Q.C.
[14] Mr. Holmes, one of the masters at Harrow School—*dead.*

This was the programme of what proved to be one of the best trump cards of our twenty years' management:

On Saturday, January 12th, 1878, for the first time, will be acted a play in four acts, called

## DIPLOMACY,

adapted for the English stage from M. Victorien Sardou's comedy *Dora*, by Mr. Saville Rowe and Mr. Bolton Rowe.

Act I.—'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence.'—*Byron.*

Act II.—'Mark now, how a plain tale shall put you down.'—*Shakespeare.*

Act III.—'But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more.
Farewell!'—*Tennyson.*

Act IV.—'What do you call the play?
The Mouse-Trap! Marry, how?'—*Shakespeare.*

| | |
|---|---|
| COUNT ORLOFF | MR. BANCROFT. |
| BARON STEIN | MR. ARTHUR CECIL. |
| MR. BEAUCLERC | MR. JOHN CLAYTON. |
| CAPTAIN BEAUCLERC | MR. KENDAL. |
| ALGIE FAIRFAX | MR. SUGDEN. |
| MARKHAM | MR. NEWTON. |
| ANTOINE | MR. DEANE. |
| MARQUISE DE RIO-ZARÈS | MISS LE THIERE. |
| COMTESSE ZICKA | MRS. BANCROFT. |
| LADY HENRY FAIRFAX | MISS LAMARTINE. |
| DORA | MRS. KENDAL. |
| MION | MISS IDA HERTZ. |

The play, from start to finish, was a triumph. Before I went upon the stage for the splendid 'three-men scene,' I told the prompter I was sure the applause would be tremendous at the end of it, and asked him when we answered the call to keep the curtain up a longer time than usual, I felt so certain of success. He more than obeyed me in his zeal, and I thought would never ring the curtain

down again; nothing, however, checked the salvos of applause and the roar of approving voices, for, again and again, the curtain had to be raised in answer to the enthusiasm, which, at the close of the fine scene between Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in the third act, was almost repeated. At the end of the play, in answer to an extraordinary ovation, which must live keenly in the memories of all who were present, and enthusiastic calls for the author, I announced that the news of the play's reception should at once be telegraphed to Monsieur Sardou, to whom the adaptors of his work wished all the praise to go. The next day we received a most gratifying and congratulatory answer.

In further acknowledgment of a little *cadeau* we ventured to send the distinguished dramatist, came this letter:

'Paris, le 21 *Février*, 1878.

'CHER MONSIEUR,

'Pardonnez-moi le retard que j'ai mis à vous écrire. Je suis en ce moment accablé de travail; répétant chaque jour de midi à cinq heures, écrivant toute la matinée, et le soir trop fatigué pour reprendre la plume.

'J'ai reçu avec un bien vif plaisir le charmant objet que vous voulez bien m'envoyer à titre de souvenir de la part de Mrs. Bancroft, et de la vôtre. Je suis on ne peut plus sensible à l'amicale pensée qui vous a conseillée le gracieux envoi, et vous a fait choisir l'objet de tous le plus propre à me rappeler

sans cesse et le succès de *Dora* à Londres et la charmante urbanité de son directeur. Je ne fumerai plus désormais une cigarette, sans penser à tout cela, et le souvenir ne s'envolera pas avec la fumée.

'Priez Madame Bancroft de vouloir bien agréer mes salutations les plus empressées, et permettez-moi de vous serrer la main cordialement à l'anglaise.

'VICTORIEN SARDOU.'

I may mention here that the part of Count Orloff perhaps gave me greater pleasure to act than any character I have ever played, although it is confined entirely to the one great scene—hardly appearing in the first act of the play, and not appearing after the second. When I saw *Dora* originally, I felt the cast in regard to the Orloff to be faulty, and that the scene between the three men would gain if the part were given to an actor in whom the audience placed equal confidence with the representatives of the other two characters. To my thinking, in the big scene Orloff is the best part of the three, and calls for the greatest judgment in the acting.

A recent interesting discussion, provoked by one of the ablest of our dramatic critics, allows me to take occasion to say that tears never failed to come to my eyes at a fine moment requiring suppressed emotion when acting this character.

Apropos of this feeling towards the part of Orloff, it was pleasant to read the following words in the *Saturday Review*:

'Some time ago, when writing of the performance of *Dora* in Paris, we expressed a doubt whether adequate interpreters could be found for the great scene between the three men. We may as well say at once that we are delighted to find this doubt need not have been entertained.

'This scene, which no doubt is the one upon which the play depends, is played as admirably here as it was at the Vaudeville in Paris.

'Mr. Bancroft's performance in the scene as Count Orloff could hardly be improved, and his playing of the part throughout gives a fresh proof of Mr. Bancroft's fine power of impersonation, a thing somewhat different from acting in the loose sense which is too commonly attached to the word. The character demands an unusual capacity for indicating rather than expressing a passionate emotion, and in Mr. Bancroft's rendering of it we can find no fault.'

Equally delightful was the valued criticism of the ever sympathetic friend who wrote as follows:

'90, Gloucester Place,
Portman Square, W.,
*January* 13, 1878.

'My dear Bancroft,

'I went to the theatre with rheumatism in my back and in my knees, and I was (I need not say how unwillingly) obliged to get home to bed after seeing the first two acts of the piece only, but I saw enough to justify me in sincerely congratulating you and Mrs. Bancroft.

'You have won a great success, and you have most thoroughly deserved it. I have never seen you do anything on the stage in such a thoroughly masterly manner as the performance of your part in the great scene. Your Triplet was an admirable piece of acting, most pathetic and true, but the Russian (a far more difficult part to play) has beaten the Triplet.

'There was no mistaking the applause that broke out when you left the scene. You had seized the sympathies of the audience.

'Of the great success of the English *Dora* there is no manner of doubt, and I heartily rejoice in it.

'Yours always truly,

'WILKIE COLLINS.'

From a too grateful letter, written by Mr. 'Saville Rowe,' I make an extract, and give him the responsibility of playing upon an instrument which I have tried to refrain from blowing myself.

'It was your strong intelligence and perception of dramatic effect, my dear Bancroft, that secured for playgoers such a work as this. Your assistance has made the "grand trio" the talk of the town, and your consummate judgment in arrangement and stage management are found in every scene and every group.

'The proudest day of my life was when I found myself associated, however humbly, with such a theatre as the Prince of Wales's.'

In the same letter he further writes:

'My own pen, necessarily forced to silence, longs to enter the literary arena to proclaim what I so sincerely feel. . . . As to Mrs. Bancroft, what higher compliment can any critic pay than those tears she commands at will? What higher artistic triumph can there be than to play such a character and wring from it every possible drop of sympathy? . . . One false note in such a harmony would have produced discord.'

I may here add that Mrs. Bancroft tried very hard to escape playing La Comtesse Zicka, and only yielded reluctantly to my strong persuasions. She always felt herself to be physically unsuited to the character, and was never happy in it, despite the great praise her performance evoked.

The *Saturday Review* (January 19, 1878) said:

'Mdlle. Bartet, promising though her acting was, did not approach the complete mastery and finish which Mrs. Bancroft shows in her playing of the Countess Zicka.'

The success of the play, which owed much to the acting of all concerned, on which it is hardly our province to dwell at length, passed all our experience. The crowds that congregated outside the doors every night were large enough to make several audiences, and had the theatre been twice its size, would have brought us quickly quite a

fortune, for it was crowded to its utmost capacity in every part until July, seven times a week, as we gave an unbroken series of morning performances. The seats were secured in advance for a longer time than I ever heard of—months, not weeks—and it might well be wondered if the purchasers would ever be the occupants. The first time the late Prince Imperial saw the play was from the dress-circle; an example which many distinguished people followed rather than wait for stalls or boxes. Lord Beaconsfield, who rarely went to the play—his only previous visit to our theatre, when we were acting *School*, being recorded by himself in his last novel—came one night to see *Diplomacy*. On entering the stalls, where he sat, he was recognised by the audience, and received an immense ovation, he being then at the height of public favour. It was during this extraordinary career of success the fact became confirmed, which a year before had dawned upon us, that theatrical management might result in the means of retiring early from its cares.

One penalty we had to pay for the craze the success had grown to be. Mr. F. C. Burnand saw the play one night; when the curtain fell he went straight home to his desk, and did not leave it until he finished a masterpiece of parody, which he called *Diplunacy*, and produced with all speed at the Strand Theatre.

Not only was the travesty immensely funny, but it was remarkably well played, the mannerisms and

peculiarities of the actors being wonderfully seized by the burlesque company, whose members paid weekly visits to our *matinées* while their rehearsals were in progress. For our own parts, it was very amusing to 'see ourselves as others see us,' and we laughed as heartily at the good-natured caricatures of our peculiarities by Miss Venne and Monsieur Marius, as at the comic reproduction of Mrs. Kendal by Miss Rachel Sanger, or at Mr. Penley's grotesque imitation of the peculiarities of the Baron Stein. We forget who burlesqued Mr. Kendal, but Mr. Clayton suffered at the hands of Mr. Harry Cox (an original member of the first Prince of Wales's company, since dead). The penalty we paid for all this good fun was thus: it being easier to get seats for the burlesque than for the original, sometimes people, tired of waiting, would go to the Strand before seeing our play—a fatal thing to do—and try afterwards to take things *au serieux*. *Diplunacy* had a great and deserved success, and ran by our sides for many months.

An unpractised pen must sometimes beg pardon for not always being kept strictly to the point and sequence of the story it is made to tell, but we must not omit mention of a once distinguished member of our calling—Fanny Kemble—whom we had so often seen of late in the theatre, that we asked Mr. Henry Kemble, who was still a member of our company, although not acting in *Diplomacy*, if he would beg from his accomplished relative her autograph, that

we might add it to a collection of some value and much interest. Our request brought this kind reply:

'15, Connaught Square,
*April* 7, 1878.

'My dear Madam,

'My nephew tells me that you have expressed a desire to possess my ugly and illegible handwriting. Here it is! and I venture to avail myself of this opportunity of expressing how much I have enjoyed repeatedly the clever and admirably acted piece which is now succeeding so brilliantly at your theatre. "Old folks" are hard to please, and it is a good action to give them pleasure, and so I hope you will allow me to subscribe myself,

'My dear Madam,

'Your obliged servant,

'Frances Anne Kemble.

'To Mrs. Bancroft.'

We here may take occasion to mention two benefit performances that were given at about this time, the first being to aid that old friend of ours and favourite of the public—John Clarke; the second on behalf of that distinguished actress, Mrs. Alfred Mellon. Both performances took place in the morning, and in the month of May. Clarke asked, and at once with great pleasure received, our permission to play *Society*, that he might appear once again as John Chodd, junior. Several leading members of

our company, including 'Tom Stylus,' took part in the performance. Hare and Miss Larkin again appeared as Lord and Lady Ptarmigant; while many actors of distinction also came to his aid, and gladly took small parts in the celebrated 'Owl's Roost' scene, with its amusing five-shilling incident, which tended largely to make the performance of Robertson's comedy a marked success.

The chief incident in the other benefit, which took place at Drury Lane, was the appearance for the occasion (her last, I believe, upon the stage, which greatly added to our interest in being present) of her old friend and Adelphi comrade, Madame Celeste, who acted, with extraordinary verve and power, a scene from her once famous character of Miami in *The Green Bushes.*

Meanwhile, Sardou had produced another play at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, called *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy.* We were represented at the first performance, but decided after careful thought that it would be dangerous to attempt a play for England from it. Pressed, however, to see it, and judge for ourselves, we arranged to do so. The hurried visit resulted in confirming our decision, and we again refused the play, notwithstanding the effect of its several powerful scenes.

On June 24th, the English stage lost one of its brightest ornaments by the death of Charles Mathews. The final visit this incomparable comedian paid to a theatre as a spectator, but a few weeks before, was

to see *Diplomacy*, and this was the last time we ever saw him. He afterwards went upon a provincial tour, and on the journey by road from Staleybridge to Manchester he caught a chill, and after a brief illness died at the Queen's Hotel, in that city.

Charles Mathews was thirty when he went upon the stage, and yet lived to be, for more than forty years, one of the most beloved of the public's favourites. In a defence of himself, and the view he took of his art, he once said, 'It has been urged against me that I always play the same characters in the same way, and that ten years hence I should play the parts exactly as I play them now; this I take as a great compliment. It is a precision which has been aimed at by the models of the profession, which I am proud to follow, and shows, at least, that my acting, such as it is, is the result of art and study, and not that of mere accident.' The name of Charles Mathews has appeared very often in this book, and now, alas! we write it for the last time.

Pierre Berton, whose acquaintance we had previously made, the *jeune premier* of the Paris Vaudeville and original representative of the lover in Sardou's play, came to London this summer and saw our performance. He promised, in the friendliest way, to make us known to Sardou, with whom he had long been intimate, when we passed through Paris, and shortly afterwards came this letter:

'St. Valery-en-Caux,
*Lundi* (*July*, 1878),
Seine Inf^re.

'MON CHER MONSIEUR BANCROFT,

'Hier j'ai fait part à Sardou du grand plaisir que j'avais eu à voir représenter *Diplomacy*, et je lui ai raconté dans le plus grand détail l'excellente soirée que j'ai passée dans votre théâtre.

'Il sera très heureux de vous recevoir, ainsi que Madame Bancroft, lors de votre passage à Paris et me charge de vous le dire. Si donc vous voulez bien me prévenir un peu d'avance à l'époque de votre retour de Suisse je me ferai un véritable plaisir de vous mettre l'un et l'autre en relations directes.

'Permettez-moi de vous remercier encore de l'accueil cordial que vous avez bien voulu me faire, et croyez-moi, je vous prie,

'Votre bien dévoué,

'PIERRE BERTON.'

We were now busy in several ways. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, not foreseeing the magnitude of the success which attended the production of *Diplomacy*, had contracted engagements in the country, which were to be filled in the autumn; when, by arrangement with us, they acted the play with great éclat in the leading cities. We had no intention to resign our holiday, so resolved to keep the theatre open, and get the best possible substitutes for those who had to leave the cast. Miss Amy Roselle and hand-

some Harry Conway were engaged for Dora and Julian Beauclerc, Miss Sophie Young for Zicka, and Mr. Forbes-Robertson for Count Orloff.

All this involved much rehearsal, which also had to be given to the members of a company formed for other provincial towns, so that we found our hands full until we left home for our holiday at the usual time.

The cast was then changed, and we received a telegram at Ragatz informing us of the success of the new-comers; but, of course, the season of the year, and the removal of so many prominent names from the programme, told upon the attendance at the theatre, and the great crush to see the play was over. From Ragatz, where we visited the curious baths of Pfaeffers (which gave us the idea of being a squalid place to be condemned for a 'cure'), we drove in two days to Pontresina, travelling this year by the beautiful Schyn and Julier Passes, staying at Thusis long enough to go to the third bridge of the wonderful Via Mala, perhaps the gem of that kind of scenic beauty, before driving on to Tiefenkasten, where we rested for the night. On the next day we halted at quaint little Mühlen, which nestles in the heart of pine-clad hills, that in the winter only allow the sun to reach the village for about two brief hours of the day. After toiling up the pass, and before commencing to descend by the zig-zags to Silvaplana, we came upon the wondrous contrast presented by the view of the valley and its

chain of lakes extending from Campher to the Maloja.

We passed a delightful month at Pontresina, where we had the happiness to become acquainted with the late Madame Goldschmidt, who, as Jenny Lind, had held the highest and proudest place in public affection and regard. We then had many cheery chats over early experiences, and many a laugh too; now we deeply deplore the sad affliction which recently befell those who loved her.

Mrs. Bancroft was indebted to Madame Goldschmidt for the following anecdote, which she told inimitably; but, maybe, in the attempt to write it much of its attractiveness will be lost.

The incident occurred during one of the provincial tours of the great 'Swedish Nightingale' and her operatic company. The tenor of the troupe stammered so painfully, that it was often very difficult to follow him, or to even guess his meaning, although when he sang, not a trace of his affliction could be observed.

One day they were about to start by train from one town for the next place on their list, and where they had to appear on the same evening. They were all, except the tenor, seated in the railway carriage, when suddenly the afflicted member of the company discovered, on looking into the luggage-van, that a certain black box, which carried the important part of their wardrobe, had been left behind. The train was on the point of starting, as the tenor,

in a terrible state of excitement and anxiety, rushed up to the carriage where the others were seated, and stammered out :

TENOR : 'The b—b—b—b——'

BARITONE : 'What's the matter ?'

TENOR : 'The b—b—b—b——'

BASSO : 'What is it, my dear fellow—what is it ?'

TENOR : 'The bl—bl—bl—bl——'

BARITONE : 'Sing it, man, sing it, for mercy's sake !'

TENOR (*in recitative*) : 'All I fear is lost !'

BASSO (*shouting*) : 'What's lost ?'

TENOR : 'I fe—ar—is lost !'

BARITONE (*getting nervous*) : 'What do you mean, man ? Go on !'

TENOR : 'The black box !'

BASSO : 'Yes—yes !'

TENOR : 'The black box !'

BARITONE : 'What of it, man—what of it ?'

TENOR : 'The black box has been for—got—t—en !'

ALL THE COMPANY (*jumping out*) : 'Oh, my goodness ! we shall have no clothes !'

A little incident connected with Madame Goldschmidt's visit to Pontresina caused great amusement to her, and immense gratification to another. One morning, quite early, Madame took advantage of the hotel visitors not being about, when, slipping into the drawing-room unobserved by anyone, she sat down at the piano and began to warble forth

some exquisite music. The doctor of the village, who, of course, was an early riser, and busy paying his first professional visits, happened to be passing the door of the room at the time, and was at once attracted by her singing. He stopped, looked through the glass door, and, seeing who was there, could not resist turning the handle very softly, and entering the room without a sound. He sat behind a screen and 'feasted,' as he termed it, upon this accidental banquet of sweet voice-notes. He had never heard the great songstress in his life, and could not resist the temptation which offered itself to him. Madame Goldschmidt's back was turned in his direction, so that she could not see him, and for a short time unconsciously afforded the doctor a pleasure he said he should never forget. She was beginning afresh, when suddenly the door (which he had left slightly ajar, fearing to disturb her) creaked loudly; she turned round, and seeing that she was not alone, closed the piano and left the room. The doctor felt sorry to have been the cause of her annoyance, but at the risk of even losing all his patients through keeping them waiting, said he could not help it.

Madame Goldschmidt was much amused when told of this adventure, and had she known who it was, would, doubtless, have pretended not to have seen the intruder, but have allowed him to continue his delightful dream. Dr. Ludwig vowed vengeance to the creaking door for a long time afterwards.

We print a letter received later on from this gifted and regretted lady:

'1, Moreton Gardens,
South Kensington,
*November* 15.

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

'I am sorry to hear that your head still troubles you. I hope time and calmness will come to your help; stage-work is so apt to disturb the *head* —the hurry, the anxiety one always is in on the "planks" (as we call the stage in my old country), makes the head to quiver and the sensitive nerves to quake.

'It is very kind of you to offer us a box, only, as you *always* can sell yours, it is rather a hard task to ask you to become a loser by us.

'But your kind offer, sincere as I know it is, has been fully appreciated by us.

'My young soldier is going to—*Sheffield;* and I *love* Sheffield just now (never did *before*), as India or the Cape would have been trying to him, as he has *not* been right.

'Believe me,

'Dear Mrs. Bancroft,

'Yours sincerely,

'JENNY LIND GOLDSCHMIDT.'

During this visit, and for the benefit of the *Verschönerungsverein!* or Paths and Ways Improvement Society (of which we both hold diplomas as the only foreign members, and a mention of

which distinction might look well on our visiting cards!), Mrs. Bancroft repeated her reading of the death of Jo, from *Bleak House;* the result was very gratifying, and allows her to think in many a walk, as she treads the well-made paths, how much she helped to make them. One path was made up what is called the Little Muotas, up which it is now a walk of about an hour and a half to the summit; but, of course, it took much longer some years ago, when an old lover of the Engadine and hardy climber, Sir Paul Hunter, strayed there one afternoon to read. Becoming engrossed in his newspapers, the time flew by; he found, when he began to retrace his steps, that the night was already falling, and soon he lost his way. Knowing that the descent would grow more and more dangerous, he wisely returned to the summit and made efforts to attract attention, either from some stray shepherd on the mountain or from people in the valley far below. Shouts were soon found to be of no avail, but placing newspapers, one by one, on the end of his alpenstock, he set fire to them, and by this means made his plight known. He was answered from the village by a return fire that his signals had been seen, and then, with the companionship of his pipe, waited patiently for the rescue he now felt sure would save him from being benighted.

The news soon spread that guides had gone up the mountain to bring some one down in safety who had lost his way, and had been making signals of

distress. Lady Hunter, being among the visitors who heard all this, began to wonder what could have detained her husband. Meanwhile Sir Paul was found and guided down in safety. It being now nearly dark, with great discretion he dismissed the guides as he neared the village, and sauntered to his hotel as if nothing had been amiss, passing unobserved through the little crowd which was waiting anxiously to learn who it was the men had been sent in search of. As he, with complete *sang froid*, arrived at the hotel, Lady Hunter ran towards him, saying, 'Oh, Paul, I am so glad to see you back! where have you been? Some silly man has lost himself on one of the mountains, and *I feared it might be you!*'

It was here we cemented a friendship with Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, begun at the Kaltbad, while we found Charles Wyndham at St. Moritz, and had several pleasant days together; modest climbs, walks, and drives, to gather flowers in the Heuthal or Edelweiss above Zuz, filled up our stay—during which the sad news reached us of Harry Montague's almost sudden death in America, while travelling with *Diplomacy*, in which, as the hero, he had made a great success. Poor fellow! he was a distinct loss in certain parts to the stage, and his charm of manner made him a special favourite everywhere. When in his company he somehow had the gift of impressing the idea upon you that he had thought but of you since your last parting, and, when he said

'good-bye,' that you would remain in his memory until you met again. It was hard to die, away from friends, in a foreign land, and as young in years as he always seemed in heart—for he was hardly more than midway between thirty and forty, that age upon the border-land when one has to own to being no more quite young, while resenting for a while that ambiguous epithet—'middle-aged.'

From the Engadine we drove in four days—if lucky in your carriage and your coachman a pleasant way to travel—to the Lake of Lucerne; our stopping-places being Thusis, Dissentis, over the Oberalp to Andermatt, and through Göschenen, with its brigand-like colony of Italian navvies working fiercely at the great tunnel and the mountain-railway; then on through Altorf: the little town sacred to the Swiss idol—William Tell: to Brunnen, where we met Fanny Kemble, than whom no greater lover of the Alps has lived. Year after year, until old age has come, do the mountains draw her towards them, and many a sweet description of their beauties is to be found in her charming books. After a day spent in our old home at Lucerne, whither we liked to go, if only for a night, to drink in the weird and plaintive music of the big church-organ there, we went on to Paris to see a little of the Exhibition. After vainly driving from one hotel to another, the difficulty to get rooms was at last conquered at the Continental. We went nightly to the theatres, and among the plays we saw were *Frou Frou*, with Maria Legault,

somewhat prematurely, as the heroine, at the Gymnase; an amusing piece, of which the name escapes us, at the Vaudeville; and a careful revival, with many of the originals, of the *Danischeffs* at the Odéon. It was hard, indeed, that year to get one's foot inside the Français, and only through the courtesy of Got and the then *directeur*, M. Emile Perrin, were we able to see Augier's last new play, *Les Fourchambault*, and to be enraptured by Sarah Bernhardt in the brilliant production of *Hernani*. We this year paid an interesting visit to the charming green-room of this most complete of theatres, and also saw some of the *loges des artistes*.

Of course we went to see the realistic panorama of the 'Siege of Paris,' and, while there, were greatly annoyed by a strange-looking creature, who persisted in dogging our steps whichever way we turned. He wore an odd slouch hat, the collar of his coat was turned up, and one could not fail to observe his moustache, which seemed to grow upwards in a singular fashion. This man followed us round and round the gallery of the panorama, always halting when we did; at last, growing more familiar, he bestowed upon us half-hearted nudges and mutterings, which, without disclosing his nationality, cast doubts upon his sanity. He presently became more violent in his gesticulations, when his moustache suddenly *fell to the ground*, and at once revealed the well-known features of—*J. L. Toole!*

MR. BANCROFT'S INTRODUCTION TO M. SARDOU.

It was during this stay in Paris that I was taken, according to promise, by my friend Pierre Berton to Marly-le-roi to be presented to Victorien Sardou. We had a charming day, passing on our road from St. Germain the château of the great rival dramatist, Alexandre Dumas. The old house, standing in a forest of well-kept grounds, where Sardou passes much of his life, looking down upon the distant city where he has known the miseries of a struggling author, and basked in the adulation of the theatre-going world, is itself, with its enormous sphinxes, which guard the massive iron gates; its tapestries, old furniture, and 'black-letter' folios, alone well worth a visit, without the privilege I enjoyed of a long talk with their distinguished collector, a small, nervous, lean and wiry man, shabbily dressed, wearing an old smoking-cap, his throat enveloped in a white silk muffler—*et toujours souffrant*, he being a martyr to neuralgia. His head in those days, when he was just forty-seven, struck me as a mixture of familiar points in pictures of Voltaire, Buonaparte when young, and a typical Jesuit father, with a smile almost as telling as Henry Irving's.

He talked with nervous speed, and then, with a charming manner, would check himself politely for my foreign ear; he deeply regretted knowing no English, but said that his children, to whom he pointed as they played under the shade of the big trees, were learning our language. Even in a single

visit it was easy to feel that he had read and studied much. He is known to have rather a mania for building and reconstructing. He is a hard worker, a great reader, and loves to be surrounded by beautiful things. He talked for a long while about *Dora* (*Diplomacy*), and dwelt with glee on being abused for the perfume incident by which Zicka's theft is detected, which he proved to have been a bit of real life. The accomplished Jules Claretie, now director of the Théâtre Français, thus speaks of him: 'Il sait tout, Sardou, il a tout lu, il cause comme personne. L'auteur dramatique est égalé en lui—et ce n'est pas peu dire—par le merveilleux causeur, érudit, alerte, léger, profond, incomparable. C'est un conteur exquis et un diseur parfait.' Like the great majority of his countrymen I found he had never left his native land! At our parting he gave me a photograph of himself to hang up in our green-room, inscribed 'Souvenir bien cordial au Directeur et aux Artistes du Théâtre du Prince de Galles. Septembre, 1878.—V. SARDOU.'

As we did not intend to take up our parts again in *Diplomacy*, which ran bravely on, we lingered awhile in Paris and extended our holiday.

Breakfasting one morning at Champeaux, with the odd shingly floor and the trees reaching to its glass roof, in the Place de la Bourse, we were victims of a harmless practical joke, which we afterwards heartily enjoyed, indulged in at our expense by a humorous friend who had seen us enter the

restaurant, where, presently, to our amazement, our little party became the object of extraordinary attention and curiosity. Nothing seemed to be thought good enough for us, the bowing and scraping increased with each course, no end of little *politesses* were pressed upon us, humble waiters left our table to the control of more gorgeous persons, and the proprietors—or those in authority—attended to our wants themselves. We wondered what it could mean! we saw no other English people in the room, and felt it to be unlikely, almost impossible, that we were recognised, which might otherwise have accounted for part of the curiosity, and for *some* of the attention. Scattered groups of remaining visitors whispered together, and gazed at us in a marked and interested way. When, at last, our bill was brought, it certainly seemed a little extravagant; but as nothing compared to the ceremonial with which our coats and cloaks were given to us. The whole staff and their relatives—uncles, cousins, aunts—seemed to be assembled to see our modest departure. People rose from their seats and bowed humbly. Why? We had been pointed out, as we learnt, when we gained the street, to the *restaurateur* as members of the English royal family, travelling *incog.* to see the Exhibition quietly! We certainly discovered that we had breakfasted *en Prince*.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SEASON OF 1878-79.

WHEN our pleasant ramble abroad was over, and we returned to town, of course we went to see *Diplomacy*, and found those new to it acting remarkably well; although, to confess the truth, altered casts of plays, however well acted, have rarely the same vitality, unless a sufficient lapse of time blunts vivid remembrance of first impressions. It was evident, however, that the run would still continue for some time, so we resolved not to withdraw the play until January, and then again to revive *Caste*, seven years having passed away since we had laid aside that old friend. After a short round of autumn enjoyment in town, we spent the month of November at Brighton, travelling there in two easy days by road. On the first day we lunched, in comparative warmth and sunshine, at Reigate, and dined and slept at Crawley; waking up to find, to our amazement, all the surrounding country snow-clad. The whole experience of travelling in an open carriage was new to us in England, and we enjoyed it.

We had a pleasant time by the sea, and our friends at the theatre, Arthur Cecil, Harry Conway, Henry Kemble, and Forbes-Robertson, would come down to us on the Sundays; among other visitors were our old friend John Hare, whose country company was acting *Olivia* at Mrs. Nye Chart's pretty theatre (he himself one night giving his remarkable performance in *A Quiet Rubber*), J. L. Toole, and one eminent in another walk of life, but always very devoted to our calling, whom we have spoken of before, and now had known and loved for years, the late Mr. Critchett, who was snatching a brief autumn holiday, and, on his favourite old gray, was often at the heels of the Brighton harriers.

It was during this month that two deaths occurred, which robbed the list of distinguished actors of names not easily replaced—Samuel Phelps and Alfred Wigan. The first-named passed peacefully away at a little farm in Essex; the latter died in pain at Folkestone.

That Phelps did much for the stage he so many years adorned, no lovers of it will dispute. His long and honourable career as actor and manager at Sadler's Wells alone entitles his name to the high place it holds: famous as it was for the production of more than thirty of Shakespeare's plays. The remembrance of his still splendid performances in later life at Drury Lane, the Queen's, and the Gaiety Theatres is bright with modern playgoers, as with young actors who could not fail to

gain by their association with so true and fine an artist.

Phelps's quiet, retiring nature made him a home-bird, and he found his chief amusement in long walks and in fishing. Only late in life did he become a member of the Garrick Club ; his presence there was so welcome to those who knew him as to cause great regret that he was so chary in his visits. An admirable portrait of the famous actor in the character of Cardinal Wolsey, painted by Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who, like Jefferson, combines the use of the palette and maulstick with his love for the sock and buskin, and who played often with the old actor at the end of his career, was added by subscription on the part of a hundred members to the valuable collection of paintings owned by the club.

We have a small anecdote of Phelps to tell when he was playing Virginius in the old Sadler's Wells days. It happened on one occasion that the man who is called the 'super-master,' and who acts as the leader of crowds, had met with an accident, and could not therefore fulfil his duties as First Citizen in the forum scene, where Appius Claudius claims Virginia from her father. So the little part which leads the chorus of voices was given to the man who was second in command. As the time drew near he became very anxious and nervous, although the stage-manager had gone through the words with him several times. The scene in the tragedy where Virginius appeals to

the crowd for their support against the demand of the tyrant Appius Claudius is as follows:

VIRGINIUS: 'Friends and citizens, your hands, your hands——'

CROWD: 'They are yours, Virginius; they are yours.'

VIRGINIUS: 'If ye have wives—if ye have children——'

CROWD: 'We have—we have.'

But the poor nervous man, in his fright, put the cart before the horse, and the dialogue ran thus:

VIRGINIUS: 'Your hands—your hands——'

CITIZEN: 'We have, Virginius; we have!'

VIRGINIUS: 'If ye have wives—if ye have children——'

CITIZEN: 'They are *yours*, Virginius; they are *yours!*'

Strong in its contrast to the strength and ruggedness of Phelps's acting was the delicate and minute art of Alfred Wigan, which will be perhaps best recalled by thoughts of John Mildmay, the *Poor Nobleman*, and Achille Talma Dufard.

It was at this time that a scheme, which had for some time occupied our thoughts, to build a new theatre reached its height—a scheme which embraced the notion of a double stage worked hydraulically, to save delay in setting scenes, and since carried out successfully in America. Our idea was at length, after long consideration of the many difficulties involved, which of course included the builder's joy, 'ancient

lights,' abandoned. The site was excellent: where Newman's Yard stood formerly in Regent Street, since converted to a meat market, then again thought of for a theatre, and, as we write, being transformed into a picture gallery by C. Hallé and Comyns Carr.

Early in December we left Brighton, returning as we had gone—by road—but choosing a different route. We lunched at Horsham, slept at Box Hill, and reached home early on the following day, hearing as we drove along news of the sad illness, which ended in the lamented death at Darmstadt, of the Princess Alice.

In this month Mr. W. S. Gilbert read to us his charming play *Gretchen*, than which no work of his is more finished, polished, or poetic. Its fitness for our stage, however, we feared, and the matter went no further; but we did not lose the play without a deep sigh of regret. Driven to desperation for some new work, we decided to accept the again offered and twice discarded *Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*, prompted greatly to withdraw our former refusals by the success at the Haymarket Theatre of *The Crisis*, a version of *Les Fourchambault*, which seemed to us, when we saw it at the Français, a still more difficult subject for adaptation.

*Caste*, as we have said, was soon to be revived, and the rehearsals, now in progress, were almost as arduous as for a new play, only George Honey and ourselves remaining of the original cast. It may here be mentioned, as an instance of the great

change that had come over things theatrical, and for which we were chiefly responsible, that Mr. Honey, when he first played Eccles in 1867, received eighteen pounds a week, while for this revival, we guaranteeing also a six months' engagement, his salary was sixty.

The career of *Diplomacy* was chequered at the end of its first year of life through the illness of several representatives. Mr. Clayton was *hors de combat* through loss of voice, Mr. Conway was thrown from his horse and severely wounded in the head, Miss Roselle, owing to a domestic affliction, had also to be absent. In these emergencies Miss Henri appeared as Dora, Mr. Forbes-Robertson as Julian; while Mr. Kemble, with a loyalty to the theatre for which we were much indebted, played at different times the parts of Algie Fairfax, Henry Beauclerc, and Count Orloff—Mr. Arthur Cecil being the only member of the cast who was so fortunate as to remain steadfast, for he played the Baron Stein throughout the long run of the play.

After a brilliant result, augmented considerably by great successes in America and throughout England, we withdrew the play twelve months after its production, and the following evening, Saturday, January 11th, *Caste*, which had last been revived in September, 1871, the year its author died, was played as follows: George D'Alroy, Mr. John Clayton; Captain Hawtree and Eccles (their original

characters), Mr. Bancroft and Mr. George Honey; Sam Gerridge, Mr. Arthur Cecil; The Marquise de Saint-Maur, Miss Le Thiere; Esther Eccles, Miss Amy Roselle (a charming performance which greatly enhanced her reputation); Polly Eccles (her original character), Mrs. Bancroft. The favourite old play was marvellously welcomed, and the receipts equalled even the early days of a new production, although, of course, the seats were not secured so long in advance, as the fever of curiosity with fresh works fiercely fans the flame. Morning performances were given every week with the same success; so we can turn, for the moment, from our immediate doings.

As an item in a discussion at this time started in the *Times* with regard to the absence from our stage of English works, and the neglect by managers of the 'great unacted,' the following letter may be worth reprinting; it will, at least, serve to recall some pleasant memories of plays and things theatrical in those days:

'Some letters which have appeared in the *Times* commenting upon your article, "The Stage in 1878," would, I think, lead your readers to infer that English dramatic authors have been badly treated by the lessees of London theatres, and that their productions have been ignored, while the works of French playwrights have been unduly encouraged. In my humble opinion, this is not at all the case. At the

Prince of Wales's Theatre, since 1865, twenty-two pieces have been produced; of these, thirteen were new works written by English authors—*Society*, *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, *School*, and *M. P.*, by Mr. Robertson; *How She Loves Him*, by Mr. Boucicault; *War to the Knife*, *A Hundred Thousand Pounds*, and *Wrinkles*, by Mr. Byron; *Man and Wife*, by Mr. Wilkie Collins; *Sweethearts*, by Mr. Gilbert; and *Tame Cats*, by Mr. Edmund Yates. Revivals of the following six plays, all English, have been given: The *Merchant of Venice*, the *School for Scandal*, *Money*, *London Assurance*, *Masks and Faces*, and *An Unequal Match;* while two plays only—*Nos Intimes* (*Peril*), *Dora* (*Diplomacy*), and a one-act comedy, *Le Village* (*The Vicarage*), have been adapted from the French stage.

'At the Court Theatre, during Mr. Hare's management, six original plays—*The House of Darnley*, by Lord Lytton; *Olivia*, by Mr. Wills; *Broken Hearts*, by Mr. Gilbert; *Lady Flora* and *Brothers*, by Mr Coghlan; and *A Nine Days' Wonder*, by Mr. Aïdé—have been produced. *New Men and Old Acres*, by Mr. Tom Taylor and Mr. Dubourg, was revived, *A Scrap of Paper* and *A Quiet Rubber* only having been borrowed from the vast dramatic stores of France. At the Vaudeville Theatre Messrs. James and Thorne have produced at least five original English plays—*Love and Money*, by Mr. Halliday; *Two Roses*, *Apple Blossoms*, and *Twcedie's Rights*, by Mr. Albery; and *Our Boys*, by Mr. Byron—

while they have revived several standard English comedies, and have acted nothing at all taken from the French.

'I could write in the same strain about other theatres, and in several cases could prove that where successful French plays were rapidly adapted and acted, it was simply to dam the floods of failure that had set in on the production of original English works, but I do not think the argument would be at all interesting to the London play-goer, who, I take it, cares but little for the source whence his entertainment is derived; I think, rather, that managers would be indeed to blame were they to deny the English public the pleasure of witnessing adaptations to our stage of the many great dramatic works which are written by eminent Frenchmen, and I wonder if German dramatists are blamed because *Caste* has achieved a great success as a translated play in Berlin, or whether the Italians upbraid Signor Salvini because he finds the greatest means for the display of his genius in a translation of *Othello*.

'Your faithful servant,

'S. B. BANCROFT.'

An old friend and comrade, John Clarke, who for a long time had been ill from the same scourge—consumption—which carried off his former rival, James Rogers, died in February of this year. His association with us, as this book tells, was close and

intimate, never being, to our remembrance, broken by an unkind word.

Clarke, as the reader has been already told, dearly loved praise, and this pardonable weakness was well known to his comrades, who delighted in teasing him now and again by lauding some other actor in his own line. This so irritated Clarke that he would always quickly change the subject. One night he and some others—Toole was one of them—after supping together at a club, were driving in a cab in the direction of Clarke's house, as all the party lived in that neighbourhood. Toole determined upon getting Clarke to invite them in for a chat, that he might play upon his weakness, so began to carry out the scheme in this way.

TOOLE: 'We'll come in if you'll ask us, Clarke.'

CLARKE: 'No, Johnny; not to-night. I must get to bed now, as I have an early rehearsal. So I'll say good-night.'

TOOLE: 'Well, I'm sorry. I wanted to tell you the wonderful criticism I heard yesterday on your acting as Tom Dibbles; it must have been a fine performance.'

CLARKE (*pleased*): 'Oh—well, I hope I made a success. But—a——'

TOOLE: 'I wish I could have seen it.'

CLARKE: 'It's not so late as I thought. Will you come in for a few minutes?' (*They entered the house.*)

TOOLE: 'Didn't Rogers play the part once at the Strand?'

CLARKE (*uneasily*): 'Ye—e—s.'

TOOLE: 'Clever fellow, Rogers. I suppose you saw him in it?' (*sitting down*).

CLARKE: 'Look here, old fellow, you'd better not sit down, for I can't let you stay long.'

TOOLE: 'But I don't think Rogers could have been suited to the part somehow.'

CLARKE: 'Will you have a cigar? Ah, I forgot you don't smoke; but have some whisky?'

TOOLE: 'No, thanks' (*getting up*). 'I don't think Jimmy was to be mentioned in the same breath with you, Clarkie, as a character actor.'

CLARKE (*flattered*): 'Oh—well—a—all well enough in certain parts, you know—too fond of applause, perhaps. Do have some whisky; it's not half-past one, and do sit down.' (*After a pause.*)

TOOLE: 'But everybody agrees that Buckstone was inimitable when he first played Tom Dibbles. I suppose you often saw him?'

CLARKE: 'Well, I must bundle you off, my boy; I'm rather tired. I'll let you out myself. Good-night.'

TOOLE (*preparing to go*): 'When you played in *Box and Cox* with George Honey *you* got the most applause, I always heard.'

CLARKE: 'Ha, ha! Yes, I did; I did.'

TOOLE: 'Some one told me George was somehow "out of it" altogether.'

CLARKE: 'Yes, I think he was. Do come and sit up near the fire. I like a chat when work is over.'

TOOLE: 'I think it rather hard on you, though, when they will have it that you were a little heavy.'

CLARKE: 'Oh, they say that, do they? Well, it's just upon two; you really must be off. I'll see you out.'

TOOLE (*buttoning up his coat*): '*Were* you a bit heavy, Clarkie?'

CLARKE (*shutting the door with a bang*): 'Good-night.'

It was often a marvel how the little man hid his lameness, the result of an unfortunate accident through trusting himself, never being an accomplished rider, on a strange and unmanageable horse, which was lent to him by an officer in the Blues or Life Guards. He always said he owed the preservation of his leg entirely to the skill and patience of Sir William Fergusson, but for whom it would have been taken off by the first surgeon called in. John Clarke's good qualities were those of a fine nature; his little foible —jealousy of other comedians who played the same parts sometimes—was, at its worst, but amusing.

The mention of Sir William Fergusson's name recalls vividly to our minds the great and constant acts of kindness shown to actors by him and by many other distinguished medical men. Let us hope our gratitude tries to keep pace with their large-heartedness. We could fill many pages and write many eminent names concerning this subject, but will content ourselves with instances that had special reference to our own theatre.

During this run of *Caste*, one night we received a message from the stalls that 'Dr. (now Sir) Morell Mackenzie would like to speak to us.' He had been for years a friend—indeed, it would be impossible to over-estimate the services he has rendered us, sternly refusing at all times to accept any fee or reward, whenever sent for, and however tried his time; even to the extent of paying, throughout a prolonged sickness in our house, three visits in a day. This goodness is well known among singers and actors, and we hope he will forgive us for speaking of it to a wider circle. Dr. Mackenzie was brought round to the green-room and startled us by saying quietly, 'You have a dying man upon the stage, who is only fit to be in bed.' Inquiries told us that a poor fellow who only appeared as a servant for one minute in the second act of *Caste*, had been for some weeks ill, but was for so short a time in the theatre, and kept his troubles so much to himself, that we knew nothing of them. Dr. Mackenzie for a long while drove almost daily to a humble lodging in a remote part of London, where by no chance could he be likely to have other patients, to keep this one alive. He was patched up for a time through unceasing kindness; but his state was beyond the power of doctors to do more than let him enter another year, when his troubles ceased for ever.

A similar instance of wonderful kindness on the part of the late Mr. Critchett was also shown to a member of our company, whose child had the mis-

fortune to so seriously injure an eye, that Mr. Critchett found it necessary to remove it; afterwards, and for several weeks, going long distances to watch the poor boy through the various stages of adapting an artificial substitute: not only insisting upon doing all this, but providing everything that was necessary, the distinguished oculist's fee being limited to the father's grateful thanks. The only return we were allowed to insist upon to these and to many other such men, was to make them at all times, and especially for performances of exceptional interest, free of our theatre, where they were ever the most welcome guests.

We cannot quite leave this subject without a brief allusion to another kind medical friend to our profession, Dr. Quain, to whom we once remarked that his bright and cheery manner would alone make him welcomed by any sufferer. 'Ah!' he replied, with his well-known *soupçon* of an Irish brogue, 'although I am by nature cheerful I began quite the other way, but was cured in my youth by a kind friend who was already an eminent physician. One day he took me with him to see a patient who was in a very critical state, and when we approached the door of the bedroom, I put on a grave and, as I then thought, appropriately solemn countenance; but my friend turned round just in time to start with horror, and whisper, "For mercy's sake, don't look like that, man, or the poor soul will take you for the undertaker!" I never forgot that lesson.'

It was decided to place *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy* in Mr. James Albery's hands for adaptation, he having lately, with considerable skill, got over the difficulties of *Les Fourchambault ;* and, as we closed the theatre this year for the first four days of Passion Week, it was during a brief holiday spent at the Beach House Hotel at Westgate that we received an admirable first instalment of his work. Among other light literature of the week was some account of ourselves in the house we lived in then as 'Celebrities at Home' in the *World.* We found it pleasant reading, and, in the hope of its still proving so, reprint part of it, as the remarks embrace a very interesting, though false, prophecy concerning the little theatre in Tottenham Street :

'As Sunday night settles down on western London, and average Christians are safe in church, or poring over a good book at home, carriages and cabs drive smartly up to the little red house in Cavendish Square. It is neat and unpretending, this little red house ; the very tone of its red is as much the reverse of trumpet-like as it is in the nature of that hue to be ; but those invited to it on Sunday evenings come in rare good-humour, for they know that they will meet pleasant company of a representative kind. The noble army of nobodies are not bidden to these Sunday dinners ; for host and hostess have but one day in the week to dine out or entertain their friends, and time and space must be made the most of. It is true that of all artistic workers, the actor or singer

enjoys success in his art the most fully. His success is immediate—is before him in the applause and enthusiasm of a crowded house. He may have left pain and sorrow at home; but the shadows of life vanish in the glare of the footlights. As the welcome murmur of applause greets his ear he becomes, if a genuine artist, another man, and realizes to the full the truth that a life of art is a thing of itself, an existence beyond trouble and misery. It is not so easy for the painter or the poet to feel this. The applause awarded to the painter is as a kind of after-glow on his work. The poet is worse off still; for years will pass, and probably his best work be done, before a tardy and grudging world will accept him at all. There is nothing of this delay, hesitation, and obscurity in the career of the actor. If up to the required standard of merit, he will not long blush unseen; and then when applause comes it comes hot, not on chill paper or marrow-freezing gazettes. What names, except those of half a dozen leading politicians, were and are best known even in this serious England of ours? Those of actors and singers.

'There is, however, one drawback to the actor's glory. Work begins for him when others go to play; and bating one day in the week, dramatic artists are playing at Castor and Pollux with their friends: one is always where the other is not. Wherefore Sunday is highly prized at the little red house in Cavendish Square. As the canonical

dinner-hour approaches, Mrs. Bancroft's pretty drawing-room is occupied by men and women celebrated in the world of politics, law, literature, and art. The talk to-night is—among a hundred things—of *Caste* and Mr. Bancroft's Hawtree, declared on all hands impossible of achievement by anybody but a soldier, till the host observes, "I never miss an opportunity of explaining that I never was a soldier in my life, either regular or volunteer, although you are good enough to say that Hawtree is too perfect to have been done by anybody but a soldier. Perhaps you are caught by the swinging walk, and the knack of carrying the sword. It is merely the result of observation!"

'Dinner over, there is, after the usual drawing-room interval, an adjournment to the apartment overhead, the airiest and blithest of smoking-rooms, overlooking the greenery of Cavendish Square. It is here that, in an atmosphere fragrant with Cabanas, stories and jokes are exchanged—some fresh from the mint, like Mr. Byron's last saying to Mr. Justice Straight at the Beefsteak Club; others referring to theatrical and literary folk dead and gone, like poor "Tom Robertson." "Poor fellow," remarks Mrs. Bancroft, "he was only just beginning to enjoy his success when he died. And how dull people seem to have been to neglect him so long!" The opinion is hazarded that *Society* is not such a dramatic black swan after all, and that unless marvellously well played it is unbearable. "But they need not have discouraged

him," replies the spirited lady of the house. "Perhaps Wigan, Charles Mathews, Sothern, and Buckstone were right in refusing *Society;* but Mr. Buckstone need not have added prophecy to refusal by saying *Society* must fail wherever it is produced." "Prophecy is indeed dangerous," observes Mr. Bancroft, from behind a huge cigar. "Even such clever people as journalists are apt to break down when they try to play the prophet. Look at this cutting from a newspaper edited by a very clever man."

'The cutting is certainly curious. The scribe of the year 1835, when Mrs. Nisbett was manager of the Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Street, and D'Orsay, Vincent Cotton, and "Dolly" Fitzclarence were among the company present on the first night, delivers himself as follows: "No theatre in the kingdom has undergone so many changes, both in management and title, in a few years as the Queen's. As certain parties are endeavouring to make it *attractive under female management, apparently sparing no exertion or expense*, it may not be uninteresting to give some of its history, from the last seven years. Beverley had a lease of it at a rent of £120 per annum; and in the last year of his lease, by the death of an old woman, the proprietorship fell into the hands of a person named Perry, then a grocer's shopman. Perry purchased Beverley's remaining interest, and immediately contrived to let it for £1,000 a year! The lowest sum he has since demanded, but which he has certainly not been fortunate enough

always to receive, since all the lessees have been ruined by the speculation, has been £800. It has been called as follows: King's Concert Rooms, Regency, Tottenham Street Theatre, West London Theatre, Fitzroy Theatre, and Queen's Theatre. 'Fools and their money,' they say, 'are soon parted; and when we look to the expenses incurred, and the nature of the entertainments, we cannot discover a more expeditious method of relieving them of it. *This theatre can never be a fashionable one;* we must not have namby-pamby small-talk, but plenty of blue fire and mysterious disappearances, which can alone, with reduced rent and prices, draw anything like a paying audience."

'Nothing was ever quite so wise as this opinion looked upon paper. The management of Mrs. Nisbett, then the absolute queen of comedy, as well as the most beautiful woman on the stage—albeit Madame Vestris contested this latter palm—ended in failure; and the scribe had the pleasure of seeing the little house in Tottenham Street, lurid with blue fire, moderately filled with cheap audiences, and let at a very low rent. It never made a success even upon these terms, and seemed doomed to steady and persistent failure till Miss Marie Wilton came to the rescue.

'As might be expected, the little red house in Cavendish Square is adorned with many souvenirs of artist-life and artist-friends, such as Mr. Frank Miles's portraits of Mrs. Langtry and Mrs. Corn-

wallis West; a portrait of Maria Foote, sometime Countess of Harrington, a kind friend to Marie Wilton to the day of her death; Mr. Val Prinsep's sketch of his picture of "The Minuet;" a painting by Mr. "Joe" Jefferson of a river-side scene; and many similar tokens of regard. The smoking-room is decked with odds and ends from the Engadine, where Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft spend part of their well-earned holiday year after year. No souvenir of glacierland, however, is so dear to the hostess as the well-named "Monk," an enormous Mount St. Bernard mastiff, whose brilliant coat speaks of the grooming he receives daily. This splendid animal is the pet of the house and the delight of all visitors to that focus of good humour and good taste.'

It was also during the spring of this year that Count Gleichen (H.S.H. Prince Victor of Hohenlohe) accepted a commission for our busts. Many a pleasant morning was passed in this way in the studio built in the garden of St. James's Palace.

One day Prince Leiningen came in, and for some time watched the proceedings. Suddenly we observed that he was smiling, and asked the reason. He replied, 'I don't know how it is; but the more serious Mrs. Bancroft tries to look, the more desirous I am to laugh, as there always seems to be a smile waiting to burst forth, and the eyes seem all the time to be dying to laugh, which, you know, is very infectious.' The Prince's remark, we fear, somewhat interfered with that day's sitting.

George Gordon, who for years had been our principal scene-painter, had lately suffered from ill-health, and resolved upon a voyage to Australia. He accepted a contract there which would let him combine business with pleasure, and ended by settling in the colonies. We felt his loss very much, for he had grown, as it were, thoroughly into our ways; but, fortunately, he left us an able successor in his partner, William Harford, to whose brush we were already indebted for much beautiful work, and who had mainly painted the recent decorations of the theatre.

NOTES BY MR. BANCROFT.

From close knowledge of the details, I must tell alone how the run of *Caste* received a shock from the sudden and, as it sadly proved, the fatal though lingering illness with which George Honey was stricken while playing Eccles. For some time he had not been well, and often spoke of rheumatism in his arm and side; in fact, we learnt afterwards that throughout the last act, for some days, he had changed part of his business on the stage, and acted, as it were, left-handed. One evening, when I arrived at the theatre, I chanced to meet Mr. Kemble, whom I had not seen for some weeks, at the stage-door; he was the 'under-study' for the part of Eccles, but, in all his long connection with us, Honey had never once been ill enough to fail in his work, nor was he at all of a complaining nature. In the course of a pleasant talk, Kemble

said how tired he was of doing nothing, jokingly adding that he was driven to the resource of going to the Olympic Theatre that night to get through his evening by the aid of a tiresome melodrama. When I left the stage after the scene in which Polly teaches Captain Hawtree the proper use of a tea-kettle, I was in the nightly habit of finding Honey in the green-room, where we generally talked together for a little while until he was called to end the act, when I went to my room to change my dress. On this particular evening he was not there, but I thought nothing of his absence, and went my way. As I was about to put on my uniform, I heard some commotion; the call-boy rushed to my door, saying, 'Come down, sir, please; Mr. Honey's in a fit, and can't go on the stage to end the act.' I ran to the wings, and just had time to say to the prompter, 'Take a cab to the Olympic Theatre, and fetch Mr. Kemble, you'll find him among the audience there,' when the cue was given for the entrance of poor Honey, who by this time had been lifted from the ground and placed in a chair. The situation reached in the play was the end of the first act, where George D'Alroy, full of love, defies the world and its opinion, resolving to marry the humble Esther Eccles; Sam Gerridge and Polly, in contrast, have been quarrelling, and she has locked the door against him, retaining the key. The romance of George and Esther, at its supreme moment, is rudely interrupted by the

shaking of the door from the outside, and the voice of the now drunken Eccles, noisily asking to be let in, awakes the lovers from the land of dreams. Esther looks at George, and he at her—looks deeply full of meaning that carry on the tale; the girl silently crosses the room, gets the key from her sister, unlocks the door, when the wretched father reels into the room. This is what happened: There was no time for thought; at the moment I only saw that Honey, from whatever cause, was helpless. I gave the knocks and shook the door, crying out to Polly, in the voice of Eccles, for him to be let in. The business of the scene was gone through without those upon the stage knowing that anything was wrong. As the key was turned in the lock by Miss Roselle, I gathered Honey up in my arms, and held his body in the opened doorway, upon which tableau the curtain fell. It took but a moment then to make the terrible discovery that the audience had roared with laughter at the powerless form of a paralyzed man. To find our old comrade, who was a favourite with everyone, inarticulate, with one side of his body helpless, was a painful shock to us all. Messengers were sent at once for medical aid, also to Honey's house to warn those there of his returning very ill: I then, with help, carried him to his room, where his vain efforts to either speak or move were dreadful to see. Dr. George Bird, of Welbeck Street, who had been our medical adviser and kind friend for many years—since the days, in fact, when he pro-

longed, as long as human skill could do so, the life of Tom Robertson—was the first to arrive; from his face, I saw at once that things were serious, and presently he took poor Honey home. Meanwhile, it was not difficult to cut Eccles out of the little he had to do in the second act, and Mr. Kemble, through the fortunate chance by which I knew his whereabouts, reached the theatre in time to dress and end the part; this I explained in a brief apology to the audience, who knew nothing further of the tragedy on our side of the curtain. In a few weeks poor Honey recovered sufficiently from this first stroke to come down to the theatre one night, without his doctor's sanction, and lamely played his part —a danger he was prevented from again risking by peremptory orders. With this exception, Henry Kemble gave an excellent rendering of Eccles until this third run of *Caste* was brought to a close.

The comedy was withdrawn at the end of May, and a summer programme, of the lightest nature, perhaps, ever offered to the public, was acted for the rest of the season; and, to the amazement of most people, was found strong enough to fill the theatre until nearly the end of it, when very hot weather came. The play-bill, which proves what may be almost termed the audacity of the experiment, comprised *Heads or Tails*, a little comedietta originally produced years before at the Olympic Theatre, written by Palgrave Simpson, and now acted by Arthur Cecil, Harry Conway, and Henry

Kemble, who was very amusing as an amorous young man afflicted with a chronic cold: the ladies engaged in the piece were Miss Ida Hertz and Miss Augusta Wilton; followed by W. S. Gilbert's delightful gem, *Sweethearts*, in which we acted together for the first time; and Buckstone's comic drama, *Good for Nothing*, with this cast of characters: Tom Dibbles, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Harry Collier, Mr. John Clayton, who was replaced by me when he left England to join Dion Boucicault, whose eldest daughter he had married, in America; Charlie, Mr. H. B. Conway; young Mr. Simpson, Mr. Kemble; and Nan, Mrs. Bancroft.

This was the year when the company of the Comédie Française played their brilliant engagement at the Gaiety Theatre, while their own classic home was under repair. Among the plays we saw were *Phédre*, *Tartuffe*, *L'Etrangère*, with its bevy of female talent in Sarah Bernhardt, Croisette, and Madeleine Brohan; *Le Sphinx*, and *La Joie fait Peur*, in which the chief parts were taken by Got and Favart. It fell to our lot to sit next to Sarah Bernhardt, whom we had met several times before, at a luncheon given in June, in honour of the distinguished troupe of comedians which dates from Molière, at the Mansion House, when we were much amused by the extraordinary announcements of some of the distinguished guests—Monsieur Coquelin became 'Cockerleen,' while the names given to Mounet-Sully and others defy transcription. Subsequently

we were obliged to assure Madame Bernhardt and her companions that the Lord Mayor meant no slight to them by not appearing in his robes and chain of office, nor in dispensing with the presence of his sword and macebearers. Others among them were somewhat affronted because the 'Long Parlour' in which the repast was served was adorned by busts of Wellington and Nelson!

Social events, more or less public, included some of those charming gatherings which continued for a few years on certain Sunday afternoons in the picture-rooms of the Grosvenor Gallery. Nothing of the sort that we remember ever was more successful in the bringing together of people of every degree and kind, from princes and princesses of the land to humble dwellers in Bohemia, for an hour or two of *camaraderie*. The names of those one saw and met there would fill a book, each page of which would burn with shining lights.

I now approach a most important event in our theatrical life,—why we took the Haymarket Theatre. Although we suffered very much at times through the inconveniences of the little theatre, and were annually reminded of its many drawbacks when the house was inspected by the Lord Chamberlain's representatives, we were loth to leave a home so endeared to us by the brightest events of our career. Nearly every theatre in London, at one time or other, had been offered to us; and we always, half-jokingly, replied, 'No, the Haymarket only will

tempt us.' The knowledge of the ease, however, with which we could fill a larger house with a good play, and some remembrance of the shoals of people who had never been able to see *Diplomacy*, for example, led to serious thoughts upon the subject, as well as the scheme of building a new theatre, which we have mentioned. Nor must it be forgotten how many rivals had sprung up since the opening of the Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1865. The Holborn, the Queen's (both since destroyed), the Gaiety, the Vaudeville, the Court, the Criterion, the Globe, the Opéra Comique, the Folly (Toole's Theatre), and the Avenue, all were new; while the Savoy and the Comedy were already talked about. All these new houses introduced, naturally, the luxuries we had started. What a little time before had been exceptional now became general; for in earlier days, it may be remembered, carpets in a theatre were unknown (to this day the only *fauteuils* in which they can be found in Paris are at the Grand Opéra; for even at the Français the luxury stops short at the *balcon*). This was my state of mind when the freehold of the St. James's Theatre was offered to us at a price so tempting that it would have paid, we thought, to pull it down and speculate in building chambers on the site had we cared to do so. The fortunes of the Haymarket were not at this time of the brightest, and some strange and indescribable presentiment seemed to say, 'Don't even enter the St. James's, or you will be tempted to buy it, and

perhaps at the wrong moment.' Anyhow, that was my line of action. Directly afterwards we heard that Lord Kilmorey had become the purchaser, and as we had refused the freehold, we found it easier, perhaps, to decline to become a tenant. Then the news was soon afloat that Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal, who had now become his partner, were to be the new managers, by whom it would be opened, after great alteration, in the autumn. The friendly rivalry of our old companion, Hare, at the Court mattered not, both being small outlying theatres—indeed, was often good for both of us—but this news, I admit, made me think how I could say check-mate! In a few hours I was closeted with Mr. J. S. Clarke, the then lessee of the Haymarket, to whom I frankly said, 'I never had the pleasure of meeting you off the stage before, Mr. Clarke; but I will lay my cards on the table, and say at once I want your theatre. How is it to be done?' All sorts of schemes and plans were talked out between us, and for several weeks the matter was in abeyance. Then came a time when the negotiations were quite at an end: I resolved to think no more of the idea, and to stay at the dear old place. Suddenly Mr. Clarke asked to see me one morning and reopened the business. In a few days all was settled. I agreed to buy the remnant of his tenancy; the trustees promised me a fresh lease of the property, and I undertook to rebuild the interior. It was thus we achieved the ambition we sought before we finally gave up

management (which even then we contemplated), to be lessees of the first Comedy Theatre in England.

The close of this season was a very busy time. Long consultations in lawyers' offices: the same with architects: and anxious interviews with Mr. Albery, who was behindhand with his work—the play we had fixed on to open our final brief campaign at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; for which followed the making of fresh engagements, as we both decided not to play in it, that my energies might be better given to the rebuilding of our future home. However, all things have their end, and so had these trying weeks. Great help had to be given to Mr. Albery with the last act of the play, through unfortunate ill health which befell him at the time. The rehearsals proceeded well, however, and on the 1st of August the season closed. On the 2nd I signed the Haymarket lease; and on the 3rd, worn out, we hurried off to our good friend Pontresina.

HOLIDAY NOTES BY MRS. BANCROFT.

On our journey from Charing Cross to Dover, we had one more passenger in our compartment in the person of an elderly maiden lady, a native of the Emerald Isle, as we soon discovered. She sat opposite to me, and by her side was a big cage covered with a green baize cap. We were soon made aware that a parrot was inside by a remark every now and then, in a broad Irish brogue, from underneath the aforesaid green baize: 'Hullabaloo, that's roight!' This speech

from the parrot, which it had evidently been taught in the kitchen, greatly annoyed its mistress, who, every time it was uttered, retaliated by giving the cage a bang. The proceeding seemed so usual that the bird considered it as part of the performance, and was often only encouraged to repeat the observation. The old lady exhibited much anxiety about the probable state of the Channel, and kept asking questions of me as to what I thought it would be like; and as I answered her, she would reply, in powerful Irish, with the same question in other words, thus: 'Are ye a good sailor?' 'Not at all.' 'Ye're not?' 'No.' 'Ain't ye? Do you think it'll be calm?' 'I think so.' 'Ye do?' 'Yes.' 'Do yer?' The parrot interrupting every now and then from under the covering, 'Hullabaloo, that's roight.' 'You think it'll be loike a lake?' 'I really am sure it will be calm.' 'Ye are?' 'Yes.' 'Are ye?' Parrot, 'Hullabaloo, that's roight.'

When we were on board, it turned out to be a little rougher than we expected. The Irish lady was seated on a chair with the cage close to her, and at every heave of the boat the poor thing gave indications that she was *not* a good sailor; the hidden parrot, at each evidence of her sufferings, and much to her annoyance, exclaimed loudly, 'Hullabaloo, that's roight.'

At the Roseg Hotel, the friends we either found there, or who arrived soon afterwards, numbered Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Yates, Mr. (now Sir) Arthur

Sullivan, Mr. Joseph Barnby, Mr. J. C. Parkinson, Mr. and Mrs. George Lewis, Mr. Otto Goldschmidt, Sir Daniel and Lady Lysons, Mr. Briton Riviere, Mr. Oscar Browning, Mr. Rudolph Lehmann, Mr. and Mrs. Meadows White, and Mr. Arthur Cecil. Does not the mere mention of these names bespeak a happy holiday? The news came, just after our arrival, of Fechter's wretched death in America. Edmund Yates, who knew him well, shared our regrets that the last years of this once fine actor's life should have been so sad. But a decade or so before, the idol of the public, the compeer of all distinguished in the arts, the welcomed guest at homes like Gad's Hill; and now to die, beyond the seas, neglected, friendless, almost forgotten. Few actors at their zenith have held greater sway; few could compare with him in romantic parts; fewer still could claim to have stirred two nations of play-goers in different tongues; but such is the fleeting nature of our work, so small the record of it left behind, that one might ask how many are they who now can speak of Fechter as he really was some five-and-twenty years ago! His talent was not confined to the stage, as an admirable and spirited bust of himself, his own work, now in the Garrick Club, will show.

Happy, lazy days, pleasant walks and drives with one or other of the friends whose names we have mentioned, and whose presence made this year's stay more than ever to be remembered, soon re-

stored us from the wear of the hard end of our finished season, and attached us more firmly than ever to the Engadine. Many wonder at our fidelity, and fail to see the strong attraction there. These are matters not to be argued, or all the world might hurry for its holiday to one spot; but if to one spot we owe gratitude for recovered health and strength, for peace and rest from the turmoil of a busy life, that spot is Pontresina.

The gratitude we feel towards the Engadine reminds me that one day I was wandering through its beautiful woods with Mrs. George Lewis, when we chanced to talk on this very subject of gratitude, and I related to her a few cases in my experience where great kindnesses had been rewarded by the opposite quality. After expressing her opinion, Mrs. Lewis added, 'Well, I ought not to be very surprised, for I know of an instance which is, to say the least, startling. It was told to me by the friend to whom it occurred. A maid who had not been with her very long fell seriously ill. The lady not only fed this girl upon all sorts of delicacies, but absolutely nursed her, night and day, during the serious part of her illness. The girl recovered, and was sent away to regain strength; but on her return she gave notice to quit. Upon being asked her reason for so unaccountable a decision, she replied that she had nothing to complain of, except that as her mistress had nursed her so carefully through an illness, she could not possibly be a lady, as no lady would have done it; therefore,

as she could not afford to live with anyone but a lady, she must leave!'

*Moral.*—'There was once an animal with long ears, who, when he had drunk from the pail, kicked it over.'

To aid the funds of the proposed little English church, we got up our first important entertainment —this year in the big room of the Krone Hotel— the sum realized being so great that the foundation-stone was laid before we went away, and the building really started. With such friends to help as were this year assembled there, the programme took a strongly musical turn, and the amusement provided was very exceptional to be able to offer in a far-off mountain village. Visitors came in crowds from the neighbouring resorts as well, and the affair was a great success all round. Sir Arthur Sullivan and Mr. Otto Goldschmidt played a splendid overture *à quatre mains*. We gave readings and recitations, which were interspersed with songs, and concluded the entertainment with the musical triumviretta, *Cox and Box*, which was admirably played by the accomplished composer of its delightful melodies; Mr. Arthur Cecil; and Mr. Barnby, who was a capital Sergeant Bouncer. I was highly gratified at moving the great actress, Madame Ristori, to tears during my reading of 'The May Queen,' and very pleased with the bouquets of lovely mountain-flowers handed to me by the well-known chaplain at Pontresina, the Rev. J. W. Ayre.

The preparation for this entertainment was most amusing. Nothing was heard for days in the hotel but snatches of songs, poems, recitations, musical selections, and dialogue from *Cox and Box*. I used to spend the early morning in the drawing-room, rehearsing Tennyson's poem, with Mr. Otto Goldschmidt at the piano. I had thought of introducing music at certain parts of the poem, and asked Mr. Goldschmidt to kindly arrange something appropriate for me. He was so pleased with the idea (for it had never been done before) that in the kindest manner he consented, and worked as hard as though he had been going to conduct the Bach Choir. A little later on the lady who sang 'Is this a dream?' rehearsed with Arthur Sullivan over and over again; then came the rehearsals of *Cox and Box*, so that the days were pretty well filled up, and there were one or two visitors who could not for the life of them understand it all. A friend of ours, Mr. Arthur Swan, kindly offered to collect the 'properties' for *Cox and Box*, and gradually his room became so full of them that the chambermaid thought he had gone mad, for it was with difficulty she could do her work. Arthur Sullivan was very anxious to have a very gaudy waistcoat for Mr. Cox, and we searched Pontresina and St. Moritz high and low, but nothing of the kind could be found: when we asked for it, the only answer we received was, 'Nein, nein!' (If Byron had been there he would have remarked, 'I don't want *nine*, I only want *one*.') At last, after

fruitless efforts, Arthur Sullivan having arrived at a stage of despair about the failure, and wondering what he should do, an idea struck me. I searched for a piece of the most startling material that I could buy, and succeeded in finding a pattern that gave one a headache to look at; 'Mr. Cox' was in ecstasies. He brought me one of his own waistcoats, which I covered with this wonderful conglomeration of colour, and the garment caused quite a flutter of amusement amongst the audience. Arthur Sullivan said he would never take the cover off that waistcoat. I wonder if he ever did!

We escaped during this holiday, with a sprain and some few bruises, from what might have been a serious accident. Driving in an einspänner up the Bernina Road, a vicious horse nearly brought us to grief by backing over a small precipice. It was one of the few cases when jumping from the vehicle was the right thing to do, and fortunately we both did it in the nick of time.

When we again turned our faces towards home and work, it chanced to be on the same day that the Barnbys and Arthur Cecil had fixed to go; also that both Mr. Barnby and ourselves had offered Arthur Cecil a seat in either of our carriages, our first destination being the same. Those who know Arthur Cecil and the difficulty of his life—how to make up his mind—may guess the strait in which this double offer placed him. At length the matter was decided by his learning that our carriage would

start twenty minutes later than the other, and he went with us; his eccentric proceedings at our departure from the hotel (messengers being despatched each minute in search of things forgotten), and his prolonged adieux, procuring him the distinction of being thus spoken of by the head waiter, who had witnessed the entertainment given by us recently, '*Das ist, gewiss, der erste komicer!*' Finally we drove away amidst roars of laughter from a crowd of friends who saw us off; the hood of the carriage being laden with unpacked luggage, including a large wet sponge, hurriedly flung in at the last moment by Mr. Frank Schuster, and enlivened further by cries from Arthur Cecil, who shouted in turn, 'I must go back!' 'I haven't paid my laundress!' 'I owe something at the chemist's!' 'I've given nothing to the Church!'

After a very happy time we turned homeward to face rehearsals at the Prince of Wales's and rebuilding in the Haymarket.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SEASON OF 1879-80.

It will be readily believed that not without many stirring emotions did we begin our final season in the little theatre which had for so many years proved our firm and steadfast friend, and where we had earned both fame and fortune—for who could foretell the fate of our bold removal, full as we were of hope concerning it?

BEGUN BY MR. BANCROFT.

Although a very effective drama was made from *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*, there remained the blemish, always so against its success, of unlocking a skeleton from a dead man's cupboard, and a feeble love-story. The play was excellently acted; but the absence of both our names from the programme, an intention already mentioned, gave it a strange look, which was perhaps increased by the new arrangements and the announcement of our early departure to the Haymarket. This combination of events may have had some influence on the play's failure to attract large audiences. We produced Mr. Albery's adaptation, which was called *Duty*, on

Saturday, September 27th, when it was performed by the following cast:

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR GEOFFREY DEENE, BART. | MR. H. B. CONWAY. |
| JOHN HAMOND, M.P. | MR. ARTHUR CECIL. |
| DICK FANSHAWE | MR. FORBES-ROBERTSON. |
| MR. TRELAWNEY-SMITH | MR. KEMBLE. |
| MR. PAWLEY FOX | MR. DAVID FISHER, JUN. |
| STRINGER | MR. NEWTON. |
| BLAKE | MR. DEANE. |
| LADY DEENE | MRS. HERMANN VEZIN. |
| MABEL HOLNE | MISS MARION TERRY. |
| MRS. TRELAWNEY-SMITH | MRS. JOHN WOOD. |
| ZOE SMITH | MISS AUGUSTA WILTON. |
| MARCELLE AUBRY | MISS LINDA DIETZ. |

To suggest the 'argument of the play' we chose a line from Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*,

'The evil that men do lives after them.'

On Tuesday, September 30th, we attended the final performance at the Haymarket under Mr. J. S. Clarke's lesseeship. In his speech at the end of the play he alluded in kind terms to our undertaking, and on the following day we took possession of the theatre, when its demolition immediately commenced.

These were anxious days and weeks, as may be well imagined, not lessened by the annoyance of the new play—in spite of its being admirably acted, for how could it be otherwise with such a list of names, and always well received?—having the aspect of not lasting until the end of our time at the old theatre. We had arranged with Mr. C. J. Phipps to be our architect, and he had prepared his plans, founded on my theories, which in the kindest way he put into practical form. These plans for the new internal structure had now

received the sanction of the trustees and the authorities, much of the work being already in progress.

The following letter will suggest ubiquity on my part at this time :

'110, Haverstock Hill,
*October* 5, 1879.

'DEAR BANCROFT,

'I called at the Haymarket yesterday to learn that "Mr. Bancroft had just left by the stage-door," and afterwards at the Prince of Wales's, to be informed that "Mr. Bancroft had just gone by the *front* door." "A plague o' both your houses," thought I. I will try to look in at the *stage*-door of the Prince of Wales's about 12.45 to-morrow, and take my chance of finding you. But if "Mr. Bancroft shall have left"—by the window! I shall go on and take my chance at *both doors* of the Haymarket.

'Yours sincerely,

'J. S. CLARKE.'

While the first rough work of the builders, or rather destroyers, was going on, I took the opportunity to see Sardou with reference to his play which was soon to be produced at the Français, and of which we had great hopes ; the distinguished author, perhaps, placed too much reliance on a statement made when he wrote to me on the subject, 'Il y a dans la pièce un très beau rôle de femme, dans le genre de Dora, *et pas l'ombre d'adultère*.' The great difference, it seems to me, in a word, between French

and English novels and plays, speaking generally, is that the one so often begins at the exact point where the other usually ends—the marriage of the heroine.

I had a pleasant reception at Marly-le-Roi on this second visit to the dramatist's beautiful home. Of course I found Sardou wrapped in the inevitable white muffler, and, of course, as inevitably *souffrant*. A long and cheerful talk confirmed my hopes about the play, and sent me back in high spirits to the gay city (upon which one looks down at Marly, as, on a clear day, London can be seen from Hampstead or from Highgate). During my short stay in Paris, I remember a festive night with my embassy friends at the Gymnase, after a delightful dinner in their company, where they were having great success with *Jonathan*, an audacity which, I presume, defied the combined efforts of Burnand, Wyndham, and other accomplished transplanters of such fragile wares, for it has never seen the lights of London. When I got back to their glare—or, speaking by comparison after leaving Paris, to their dimness—it chanced that I was obliged to attend some club committee meetings, held late at night, during the time when double gangs of men were working at the theatre, and still engaged in pulling the old interior to pieces. There was a dreadful fascination in this work to me, and I could never resist, when walking home in the small hours after one of those protracted meetings, taking the Haymarket on my way just to peer through the chinks in the hoarding, and see the falling masses of

timber which were being hurled from the upper parts into the once classic pit by the night workmen, in hideous dust and uproar: the effect being rather that of demons joyfully engaged in some destructive orgie. While this work of demolition was in progress, I remember one of the men describing the fleas they disturbed as being 'more like ponies'! Perhaps now and then I thought at those times whether I was wrong to have embarked in an undertaking of such cost and risk, for I was pledged to the trustees to spend ten thousand pounds upon their property to the satisfaction of their own architect, and knew already how far I meant to exceed my obligation.

There came a period in the work which certainly was not inspiriting. While its machinery was being lowered, and before it was relaid, the stage was a yawning cellar, the auditorium was a forest of scaffold-poles, supporting-planks, on which I walked many a dangerous distance, and everything, in fact, was chaos.

Strangely enough, at the very time his former home was being so completely destroyed, poor old Buckstone, whose health had for some years been fast failing, died at Sydenham. I confess to some feeling, which we both entertained when told of it, that at least he was spared seeing the house that had for so many years been his—where once he had secured what must have been fortune enough—demolished and rebuilt beyond his recognition.

Buckstone! What enjoyment his mere name recalls! How one began to laugh directly he spoke the simplest sentence, even before he came upon the scene; and when he entered how one roared out loud—a tribute the whole audience paid him as if it were his right! What an eye! what a mouth! He was the best comedian in his line I ever saw, and my youth owes much of its happiness to his ripe and over-brimming humour.

To tell an anecdote of Buckstone is nearly impossible; they must have all been printed. One night, years ago, at a party at Walter Gowing's, Mr. Dillon Croker, a well-known and admirable imitator of the prominent actors of the day, was amusing the guests in that way, when Mrs. Buckstone prevailed on him, after some difficulty, to give an imitation of her husband, who, she urged, was in another room, and really too deaf, in any case, to hear the fun. After a reluctant consent, and amidst roars of laughter, the reproduction of the favourite actor's peculiarities was most ably given. The laughter was loud enough to attract Buckstone's attention, and he entered the room in the middle of it, and stood close to me. Seeing the sort of amusement going on, for he knew the bent of the entertainer, whose back was towards him, he asked me in his funny way: 'Who's he imitating now?' 'You, sir,' I replied, stifling my laughter. 'Eh?' 'You, sir,' I repeated. 'Oh, me—ah, devilish good, I dare say! I could do it better myself!'

It was soon evident that *Duty* ought to be withdrawn, so we resolved to appear in some performances of *Ours* at the old theatre until our new home should be ready for us. The failing play therefore came to an end after a career of eight languid weeks, and perhaps it was only right that the last bill at the little house should bear the name of Robertson, to whom we owed so much of our success there. In these words we announced the 'Farewell revival at this theatre of *Ours*. Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's last appearances prior to the opening of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, under their management, at the beginning of the new year.' *Ours* was cast in this way: Prince Perovsky, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Sir Alexander Shendryn, Mr. Kemble; Angus MacAlister, Mr. H. B. Conway; Hugh Chalcot, Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Lady Shendryn, Miss Le Thiere; Blanche Haye, Miss Marion Terry; and Mary Netley, Mrs. Bancroft.

This oft-tried friend again stood by us, and served to fill the little theatre until we left it.

We were perplexed as to what our opening programme in our new undertaking should be, no one being better aware than ourselves that our company had not the same strength as formerly for certain plays, the greatly increased number of theatres having so added to the difficulty of keeping the same actors together; *As You Like It*, the *School for Scandal*, *Money*, *Masks and Faces*, and *Old Heads and Young*

*Hearts* being all discussed between us. With regard to the last-named comedy we wrote to the author, who was then slowly recovering from a recent serious illness. The answer was, as usual, characteristic of the writer:

'Washington,
*November* 7, 1879.

'My dear Bancroft,

'I believe the right of *Old Heads and Young Hearts* belongs to Webster. For many years, from 1841 to 1860, I never looked after such rights, and let them slide. Webster picked them up somehow, and has since enjoyed them, rightly or wrongly, I don't know.

'I doubt whether I shall ever cross the ocean again. I am rusticating at Washington for a month or two, having recovered some strength, and am waiting now to know if my lease of life is out, or is to be renewed for another term. I have had notice to quit, but am arguing the point ("just like you," I think I hear you say), and nothing yet is settled between Nature and me.

'With kind love to Mrs. Bancroft, and true wishes for your success,

'Believe me,
'Sincerely yours,
'Dion Boucicault.'

One letter from America reminds me of more comrade-like words from 'the other side':

'13, West 30th Street, New York,
*November*, 1879.

'My dear Bancroft,

'Claiming the privilege of seniority, you see I take the initiative in dropping the "Mr." I write a few lines to congratulate you on being manager of what will be, I feel sure, under your auspices, the leading comedy theatre in England, and to express to Mrs. Bancroft and yourself my sincere wishes for an increased lease of health, prosperity, and success.

* * * * *

'Don't you think you can some day, in your vacation, take a run over and "have a look" at us? How pleased I should be to take you by the hand again!

'With kindest regards to Mrs. Bancroft,

'Always truly yours,

'Lester Wallack.'

Influenced by the remembrance that our own parts in it would be light, our choice fell finally on *Money*. We had to make special terms with the present Lord Lytton for its revival, as, by the law of copyright, the work would soon become public property — the forty-two years since its original production having then nearly expired; so that this was the last run of the comedy for which fees were paid.

We strengthened our company to the best of

the means at our disposal, but the five intervening years since its last revival rendered it impossible to recall some of the former well-remembered successes to the cast. Very elaborate scenery was talked over and arranged; in short, every effort was made in all departments to outdo previous attempts in that direction. This involved a heavy strain of work—through every hour of the day I was at the beck and call of architect, scene-painters (several of whom were busy on our behalf in different parts of London), decorators, clerk of the works, stage-carpenters, costumiers, upholsterers, and the host of smaller folk employed *ad infinitum* in and about a theatre. My correspondence also greatly increased, and I had to play the long and arduous part of Hugh Chalcot in *Ours*, which required all my spirit every night. Afflicted as I had been for years with a ridiculous mania for doing much of other people's work in addition to my own, neither my position nor my state of mind could fairly be called worthy of envy. I cannot too gratefully acknowledge the cheerful support I found always at my side in Mrs. Bancroft, who is blessed with the philosophy of thought that 'most things happen for the best,' and that 'all will come right in the end;' while I, under a quiet exterior, inwardly 'grizzle' unceasingly, until that end is manifest.

The chief features in my rough outlines of the new theatre, made practical by Mr. Phipps, were

the proscenium in the form of a large gold frame, and the abolition of the pit. I make this early allusion to the last idea to record many a view, from the giddy heights of scaffoldings and ladders, which I had of my wife's little figure gazing plaintively from where the footlights were to be, up to the circle which was to be our equivalent for a pit, and to which our old friends, by my ruthless act, were henceforth to be relegated; that was the one part of my scheme which frightened Mrs. Bancroft, and more than once she asked if even 'a little tiny pit were possible.' I was as fixed and determined in my views then, as I may, before resuming the subject later on, frankly say I should be now if the whole matter had to be begun again.

My other novelty—the frame—was quite original, and I may say here that, when at Homburg a few years later, I found the new Opera House in Frankfort also had a proscenium much of the same formation, I was comforted to learn, upon prompt and careful inquiries, that its construction was later in date than the carrying out of my idea at the Haymarket. Since then, at the reconstructed Théâtre de la Monnaie, at Brussels, I have also been paid the compliment of reproduction of my notion.

The scheme was for a time involved in some difficulty, when I said: 'This is what the intention must combine: hidden footlights, which, when the curtain falls and is within three feet of them, must

descend to make room for the heavy roller; and when the curtain is raised, the footlights must follow suit immediately, so that the stage is never perceptibly darkened in either case.' The answer was, 'Yes, that's all very well, but how is it to be carried out?' I replied, 'I haven't the faintest idea. I can only tell you *what* I want done, not *how* to do it.' After a succession of experiments and some trouble, the means were invented and executed by the master carpenter, Oliver Wales, in a manner that has worked successfully ever since.

I so seldom raise the veil which shields the private lives of the most public men, that I hardly like to mention in this book what, if I do, must be a sad page of it—the death of young Frank Toole at the age of twenty-three. There is no member of the calling he follows more loved and respected by his comrades than John Lawrence Toole. The highest and the humblest in our ranks shared a great sorrow, which, in the last month of this year, shattered his hopes and left him for years an altered man. It is not fit for me to write at all of the sad condition of our old friend through his own serious state of health, which added to the home grief, and I will end this allusion to the sorrow by saying that the most solemn, the most truly tragic contrast I ever saw, was this favourite comedian, who now was but the sick and afflicted father, at his dead son's grave.

Perhaps the following letter addressed by me to the *World* will sufficiently explain itself: 'Some kind

friends, we learn, have conceived the idea of giving Mrs. Bancroft and myself a little present at the close of our management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre. But what was intended as a private surprise has, by unexpected publicity, assumed the shape of a semi-public testimonial. Before the matter proceeds further, therefore, I feel compelled, on the part of my wife and myself, respectfully but firmly to decline what, had it remained in its original shape, we should have been proud and pleased to accept. I am sure that in acting thus our motives will not be misconstrued, and that the friends with whom the idea originated will know that we fully appreciate the feelings that prompted it.'

The work grew heavier and heavier at the end. The Italian workmen who were laying the mosaic floorings in various parts of the theatre even remained at their posts throughout the Christmas holidays, when we were free to make a calm inspection of how things really stood—at other times the Babel of sounds distracted and confused us. All was going well, and we felt able with certainty to fix the opening night. The rehearsals of *Money*, which began in peace on the stage of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, were ended in tumult at the Haymarket. At last all was ready, the finishing-touch to the beauty of the decorations being given by Mrs. Bancroft's ivory coloured satin curtains. The weather, unfortunately, was vile, with an exceptional visitation of dense, cold fogs.

I have not yet mentioned that we were fortunate enough to find an excellent tenant for the Prince of Wales's Theatre in Mr. Edgar Bruce, who arranged to take possession of the premises directly we vacated them, which was on Thursday, January 29th, when our long and prosperous career there came to an end. After the final performance (which certainly was appropriate in an atmospheric sense, for the Crimean winter depicted in the third act of *Ours* seemed a reminder of the frost outside), we were summoned again and again before the footlights, and at last I spoke these words :

'Ladies and gentlemen,—In taking our leave, after nearly fifteen years' management, and fifteen years of very hard work, in this theatre, where many of the happiest hours of perhaps the brightest years of our lives have been passed, a few farewell words may be expected from us. Forgive me if, on Mrs. Bancroft's part and my own, I am only able to limit them to a reminder—and I hope the reminder will not be an unwelcome one—that this is not "Good-bye," but only "*Au revoir.*" One compliment, I must gratefully acknowledge the presence to-night—and under the greatest difficulties in this dreadful weather—of many kind friends who have come to see the last of us in our old home, and who, I believe, will be with us on Saturday to wish us well in our new enterprise. In conclusion, Mrs. Bancroft and myself most heartily wish Mr. Bruce, who will be our successor here, all the good fortune that we have enjoyed.'

Mrs. Bancroft was much affected at bidding good-bye to a home so full of pleasant memories, so rich in artistic recollections, as the following words of hers will show :

'Were I to write till doomsday I could not convey the true state of my feelings as the last nights of our management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre came nearer and nearer. I could not sleep ; my heart was sick. The prospect of having to say farewell to the dear little house, every brick of which I loved, was a sad one for me. I went there day after day, and wandered from room to room quite alone. If there had been a listener, he would have heard my audible words addressed to the silent walls, which seemed to look reproachfully at me, and to say, "After all these years of service, are you going to leave us?" I here confess that if it could have been possible, when the time for our parting drew near, I would have remained in my old home, leaving Mr. Bancroft to manage the Haymarket Theatre. I threw out a hint to him that we might conduct the two houses, but of course it was a wild notion suggested by the state of my feelings at the time ; and, on reflection, it would have been more than folly, for the management of one leading theatre is enough, and often too much, nowadays.

'Never was a parting between two old friends more bitter than that between me and my dear home. My faithful servant, who throughout the twenty years' management personally attended me,

can testify to my emotion, when, after my husband's farewell words, I left the little stage for ever, rushed up to my dressing-room, and cried bitterly. Even now, after a long lapse of years, I sometimes wander in the direction of the little theatre, looking so desolate, neglected and deserted, to meditate upon the ruin of a happy past.'

### AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.

Saturday, January 31st, 1880, was the eventful date fixed for the beginning of our new theatrical life, and we had the pleasure of being allowed to hand the proceeds (as announced) of our first performance at the Haymarket to the widow of the late Mr. Buckstone.

Just before I began to dress, Henry Irving was announced to me, having found his way to the stage-door, in spite of the weather, on his road to his own work. He was greatly struck with the change in the theatre, and especially admired the new curtain (so beautifully painted by Daniel White and John O'Connor), and the Shakespearian pictures, by J. D. Watson and F. Smith. We two stood together in the balcony, where he shook my hand in friendship, and wished us 'luck' : a few minutes before the doors were opened to the public in the densest, cruellest fog that, perhaps, even London ever knew. Many are the stories one could tell of journeys to and from the Haymarket that night ; for how the audience ever reached their seats, and how the company all got there to act, really was a marvel.

The chief parts in Lord Lytton's comedy were cast as follows: Lord Glossmore, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Sir John Vesey, Bart., Mr. Odell; Sir Frederick Blount, Bart., Mr. Bancroft; Captain Dudley Smooth, Mr. Archer; Mr. Graves, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Alfred Evelyn, Mr. H. B. Conway; Mr. Stout, Mr. Kemble; Mr. Sharp, Mr. C. Brookfield; An old Member of the Club, Mr. Vollaire; Lady Franklin, Mrs. Bancroft; Georgina Vesey, Miss Linda Dietz; Clara Douglas, Miss Marion Terry.

To take the events of that opening night in proper sequence, I must begin with the Pit Question, and the riot that occurred when the curtain rose. Anonymous reports had reached me that there would most likely be a disturbance. I was sanguine enough, however, to hope that the following advertisement issued beforehand, and the nature of the accommodation offered in place of the old pit, would have prevented anything of the kind. Those hopes were vain.

'As some disappointment may be felt at the abolition of the pit, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft deem it necessary to explain the alteration.

'With the present expenses of a first-class theatre, it is impossible to give up the floor of the house—its most remunerative portion—to low-priced seats, and the management, being unwilling to place any part of the audience in close and confined space

under the balcony, the only alternative was to allot to the frequenters of the pit the tier usually devoted to the upper boxes, and now called the second circle. In carrying out the structural alterations of the theatre, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft have, they hope, specially attended to the comfort of visitors to these seats by raising the ceiling, building a new stone staircase, a refreshment-room, and by removing all obstacles to a clear view of the stage.'

Naturally enough I think it may be expected that I should here express some views on this then important subject, and tell what led me to the bold measure of daring to abolish the pit, more especially from the Haymarket Theatre, which had been long known to boast, and truly enough, the possession of the best and most comfortable pit ever to be found in a play-house, from the reason that it did not go under the dress circle.

To begin, it is perhaps necessary to remind young play-goers that the pit in the old days occupied the entire floor of the theatre, extending to the orchestra, and as the charge for admission in the leading houses was three shillings and sixpence, the pit quite earned its title of being 'the backbone of the theatre.' The dress circle and private boxes were the resort of the better classes, the wealthy, or the fastidious. The modern stall was then unknown. Gradually this luxury was introduced. Row by row, very insidiously, the cushioned chairs encroached upon the

narrow benches, which, year after year, were removed further and further from the stage, until at last, in many theatres, all that was left of the old-fashioned pit was a dark, low-ceilinged place hidden away under the dress circle, which, by contrast with its former proud state, seemed but a kind of cellar or reminder of the black-hole of Calcutta.

That thousands of earnest play-goers would far rather sit there in heat and discomfort than go up aloft to better accommodation I don't doubt for a moment, nor do I for another moment deny that I should very likely find myself of the party under their circumstances; but that seems to me outside the question. Matters had entirely changed. The pit had long lost, in most West End theatres, the possibility of being the support it used to prove, owing to the managers of them having, row by row, robbed it of its power, and made the stalls instead their 'backbone.' This grew to be eminently the case with our management, which could not have endured without high-priced admission.

I don't think anything I might add to these remarks would advance the argument, so I will return to the hooting and howling which greeted the raising of the curtain, mingled with noisy cries of 'Where's the pit?' At the great disadvantage of being dressed for Sir Frederick Blount, in which I wore a flaxen foppish wig and pink complexion, I walked upon the stage and faced the anger of the few who made the noise, which quite drowned the friendly greeting of

the many. Utterly unprepared what to say, for I had disregarded the anonymous warnings, I believe I owed something to the manner in which I spoke the few broken sentences I was allowed, through the tumult, to utter, and to never showing during that *mauvais quart d'heure* (to be exact, more than twenty minutes) the least sign of temper. What I said was not of much moment, and very likely my attempts to speak were neither soothing nor judicious; but I am not of a 'knuckling-under' disposition, and, at least, I thought myself justified in claiming the respect of the audience. Unfortunately the diversion tended largely to disconcert the actors, and to add greatly to the nervousness due to the position of all concerned.

Most things have their comic side, and so even had this little riot. Our relations with Mr. J. S. Clarke throughout the transfer of the lease, with all the business it involved, had been always pleasant, and we begged him to allow us to place a private box at his disposal. He had arranged with other members of his family to meet his son outside the theatre, but was late in arrival through the dense fog. When his son reached the theatre he ran to the box, and saw, through the little window in the door of it, that it was still unoccupied; and also that I was standing on the stage and facing the audience. He went back to the portico, hoping every instant for his father's arrival; for several minutes there was no sign of him. After a while, fearing he might have missed

him through the fog, there being several doors adjoining, young Clarke again went to the box, to find it still empty, and to still see me, through the glass window, standing in front of the footlights as before. Such part of the audience, as he could observe, were applauding violently. In this way, for a long while, he was occupied; going to and from the back of the private box and the front of the theatre, always to find the former still untenanted, and always to see me still in the same position. At last he ran against his people emerging from a cab, when, half an hour behind their time, they reached the theatre. Seizing his father's arm, he said, 'Come along, come along, or you'll miss the end of the most wonderful ovation! Bancroft, to my certain knowledge, has been bowing to the audience for the last twenty minutes. *No actor in this world ever had so magnificent a reception!*' When they entered their box they could *hear* as well as *see* my greeting.

MRS. BANCROFT'S COMMENTS.

From a tiny square hole in my dressing-room I could see all that went on behind the scenes, and could hear everything that was said on the stage; while Mr. Bancroft was going through that terrible ordeal, my profile might have been seen at the aforesaid square aperture very much resembling a postage stamp. The tumult became so awful that at last I rushed downstairs and walked about wringing my hands, and wondering how it would all end. If the malcontents could but have seen me, I am

sure they would have ceased. I at length resolved that if the uproar lasted another three minutes I would myself address the audience, and ask them to listen to me for the sake of 'Auld Lang Syne,' and to say that after so long a service I ought to be permitted to dictate to them, so to speak, and by gentle reasoning bring about a reconciliation between us. But the noise and hooting ended, and my speech was unnecessary; my next dread was that I too should be received with groans and hisses, and I was cold with fear; but my reception when I made my appearance was so great, the welcome so hearty and prolonged, that, combined with all the nervous excitement, it gave me courage, and I acted better than I had done for some time. The night was one of the most awful I can remember; a short time before the doors were opened I went round the beautiful theatre, and could scarcely see the decorations through the black veil; the elements indeed were far from propitious, and, of course, this calamity, for I can call it nothing else, sadly helped to fan the flame of discontent and temper amongst the pittites, and our positions for a time were not to be envied.

During the evening I had received many beautiful bouquets, which it was impossible to take home, as no carriage could fetch us, and no cab would take a fare; in fact, it was safer to walk, so I left my flowers in charge of my dresser; and our servant, who had come from the house to help us home, walked ahead

of us with a *white* bouquet in his hand to serve as a kind of beacon. There were many curious incidents connected with that eventful night. A party of four started from Putney in clear weather, but suddenly found themselves enveloped in the black fog on nearing town; they managed to reach the theatre, but when the performance was over were persuaded to make their way for the night to a friend's house in Bayswater, where the carriage and horse might be accommodated in the mews. After a tedious journey of some hours they arrived at the house, but found the mews more than full of other befogged victims. At their wits' end, they were at length forced to this expedient. The carriage was left outside in the road, and the horse (a valuable animal just recovered from a long sickness) and man passed the night in the hall of the house!

A curious incident also happened to our dear friend, Dr. George Bird, who, after leaving the theatre, of course followed his maxim to 'always walk home from the play,' a task, however, by no means easy on this occasion. Living in Welbeck Street, he eventually crossed Oxford Street safely, and then felt convinced that he was somewhere parallel with his own house; but whether he was struggling along in Harley Street, Wimpole Street, or Welbeck Street, he felt utterly unable to determine. At length the brilliant idea occurred to him that in this land of doctors, if he groped his way to some door which carried a brass-plate, the name

on it would be sure, by the aid of a match, to tell him whereabouts he really was. He at once carried out his plan, and in the first doorway he entered, found a brass-plate. He then lighted a match, and *read his own name!*

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

I was inundated with communications on both sides of this vexed Pit Question, many of the letters being from occupants of the upper circles on the first night, and, nearly all, full of expressions of sympathy, whether the writers of them agreed with me or not. I will dismiss the subject with one important letter which came later on, through the distance it had to travel. The writer's long connection with the Haymarket Theatre alone would give it weight.

'San Francisco, California,
*March* 25, 1880.

'DEAR BANCROFT,

'I'm a poor hand at letter-writing; I've such hundreds to answer that I hurry-scurry through them as best I can; but I *must* send you a scrawl to congratulate you on the admirable way in which you quelled the disgraceful disturbance on your first night at the Haymarket. Leaving your snug little theatre where you had done so much—so very much—to improve our art, and where you were so brilliantly successful, seemed to me a most dangerous move; but I admire your pluck in taking the Haymarket, and in doing precisely what I advised Buckstone and the trustees to do ten or twelve years ago—

*i.e.*, abolish the pit. There was no other way of making the theatre pay with the risk and heavy expenses of first-class management and first-class artists.

'I most sincerely hope and believe that your daring experiment will be crowned with the success that you and Mrs. Bancroft so richly deserve.

'Sincerely yours,

'E. A. SOTHERN.'

While the fact passes through my mind, let me recall the wonderfully hearty and really affectionate greeting given to Mrs. Bancroft when she stepped upon the stage as Lady Franklin. I would also like to add that my own reception as an actor was unmingled with less pleasant sounds. The performance was full of faults on the opening night, some of them being due to the strange ground and want of rehearsal in the new theatre. As Dutton Cook aptly said, 'It was a night of nervous excitement, and the players hardly yet understood the perspective, or the *optique du théâtre*, of their new position.' Mrs. Bancroft was, I think, the only member of the company who entirely controlled her nervousness. Many shortcomings soon were remedied as we grew accustomed to the great change in our surroundings.

An extract from a letter written by a cultured and travelled well-known man, shall represent the many flattering remarks that reached us about the theatre:

'I have no words adequately to express to you and Mrs. Bancroft my sense of gratitude for the feast of pleasure I enjoyed last evening. Everything I saw was far beyond my expectation; and having seen the interior of very many theatres in Europe, I feel convinced there is nothing either in design, decoration, comfort, and *tout ensemble* to equal the "Haymarket." It would be ridiculous, of course, to compare or contrast your house with those of magnitude like the "Scala" at Milan; but, viewing it as a house of comedy, it has not in my humble judgment, a rival.

'The proscenium and drop-scene were simply perfection. The delicate tints of the panels, the extreme finish of the paintings in them, the wealth of gilding, and the general harmony of colouring, display an artistic merit of rare excellence.

'In the distribution of the seats there is a boldness and liberality in apportioning the space which should be an example to others for all time.

'In a word, it would be difficult for professional cavillers to pick a hole in this, the most tasteful theatre in Europe.

'It was to be expected there would be a little malicious rowdyism about the pit, and you may hear of this on one or two further occasions. Of course, in your state of nervous tension last evening, consequent on the severe strain of anxious work and management, the interruption was a sorry grievance to you all. But public men must always prepare to

encounter opposition when they innovate, be it for good or evil. Still, the heartfelt applause of nineteen-twentieths of a brilliant audience must have been token enough of the superb work you have achieved, and of the exceptional reputation you and Mrs. Bancroft have earned as the inaugurators and chief exponents of a new school of dramatic art and of theatrical excellence.'

I add one more extract, from a letter written to me by the distinguished French comedian, Saint Germain :

'Que son amenagement est bien entendu. Ah, cette fois ci. Bravo, et sans restriction. Cet orchestre qu'on ne voit pas, cette rampe presqu'imperceptible, cette absence du manteau d'Arlequin, ce cadre contournant la scène! Le spectateur est devant un tableau dont les personnages parlent et agissent. C'est parfait pour l'illusion et pour le plaisir artistique.'

The Prince and Princess of Wales were at Sandringham on the opening night, or would have been present, but witnessed the third performance in our new house, when, fortunately, King Fog suspended his rule and left the beauties of the theatre clear to view. His Royal Highness expressed many kind wishes, and requested to be taken over the theatre to see the great changes in it.

As I was making some arrangements for this pur-

pose, I turned to Oliver Wales, the master carpenter, and, in reference to a question, said to him, quite unconsciously, 'Which way, Wales?' The Prince was close to my side, and the smile which played over his face as I spoke, told me of the accidental double-meaning of my words, and, it may be, they amused his Royal Highness. Such fears for the future as the pit disturbance gave me were soon set at rest, for any after objections were silent, and the receipts of the theatre showed the difference between the old and new houses very solidly. A series of morning performances of *Money* was started, and all went well.

The reader will doubtless welcome a pause that lets me tell of other things. A short time afterwards, a brilliant supper-party was given by Irving on the Lyceum stage, which, with incredible speed, was transformed into a banqueting-room, to celebrate the hundredth performance of the *Merchant of Venice*. On this occasion the late Lord Houghton proposed his host's health in a speech more remarkable for a caustic objection to the view taken of Shylock's character than for the platitudes to be expected on so festive an occasion, and which fell like a bomb-shell upon the amazed listeners. The actor, it will be remembered by his many distinguished hearers, very cleverly countered the remarks by the way he happily turned the words of his acknowledgment. It was altogether a memorable evening.

Although in earlier life so delightful a writer as Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton's keen wit has often proved a wonderful weapon; never more so, perhaps, than when, in answer to the boast of a well-known woman of fashion that 'She had often had two men at her feet at one time,' he asked if they were *chiropodists*.

A few days later, *Daniel Rochat* was produced by Sardou at the Français, with that incomparable actor of certain parts, Delaunay, as the hero, when, alas! our hopes concerning it were blighted. I could not leave our newly-started theatre to see the *première*, but was represented by a distinguished friend, then resident in Paris, who was not only a perfect French scholar, but one in whose judgment I had great confidence. The work proved to be more a theological discussion than a drama, and certainly would not have been acceptable on the English stage, even had the difficulty as to license been overcome. Sardou, however, was very angry at my refusal of the play, and I doubt if he has ever quite forgiven me for so firmly disputing his belief in it, although it proved a failure in Paris.

Our anticipation of this play being so suddenly and completely wrecked, I turned to a leaning I had for years towards the old comedy, *Le Mari à la Campagne*, long known in England as the *Serious Family*, and in which I had occasionally appeared, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, as Captain Murphy Maguire. I sought an interview with Mr.

F. C. Burnand about it, who thought the notion of a new version good, if some motive power other than religion could be suggested on which to hang fresh treatment. Suddenly, as these happy inspirations always come, he hit upon the æsthetic craze, then rampant, on which to found his play, and we at once went on with the scheme. Burnand's first wish was to make the leading part a Frenchman, while my idea was to turn him into an American —which Burnand soon afterwards agreed with. A correspondence between us shows on what different footings the question stood—actors, as varied as Monsieur Marius and Charles Wyndham, being at different times suggested for it—the eventual decision being that the character should be written for me. One remark of Burnand's, from a letter informing us that he was ordered off to Aix-les-Bains for a few weeks, I must bestow on the reader, in which the writer says, 'I am (in spite of all exercise) a slave to liver—*i.e.*, a livery servant.'

In the spring of this year, I sat to Count Gleichen for the companion to the bust of Mrs. Bancroft—which was shown in the *foyer* at the opening of the theatre for a short time before being sent to the Royal Academy, where both works were exhibited; subsequently I presented them to the Garrick Club. I also gave some sittings for a portrait to Carlo Pellegrini, apropos of which I received this characteristic note from the accomplished 'Ape':

'Studio, 53, Mortimer Street,
Regent Street, W.,
*Thursday Evening.*

'DEAR BANCROFT,

'I have sent your fac-simile to the Grosvenor. I hope you will be well hanged—I mean the portrait.

'Truly yours,
'C. PELLEGRINI.'

We soon felt, from experience, that the 'runs' of plays would, of necessity, be much shorter, and the work in consequence much harder at the Haymarket than at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

Failing a new play, we decided to follow *Money* with a revival of *School*, and learn at once the important fact to us—whether the Robertsonian mine was likely to extend to the Haymarket, or if the vein was a thing of the past, and, so far as we were concerned, quite worked out. Our own faith in it was strong, although but little shared by others when we announced our intention.

We played *Money* for three months, during quite two of which the houses continued full; and in this short time the result surpassed a longer and, apparently, more successful run of the comedy at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

On the evening of Saturday, May 1st, we changed our programme and risked the experiment of a Robertson comedy on the larger stage. There was no repetition of any disturbance about the lost pit,

which we thought a possible visitation for several 'first nights' to come; the old friend was welcomed with enthusiasm to its new home, the audience in the second circle proving that they could laugh as loudly, and applaud as heartily, upstairs as down. The comedy, which had been last produced by us in 1873, was cast as follows: Lord Beaufoy, Mr. H. B. Conway; Dr. Sutcliffe, Mr. Kemble; Beau Farintosh, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Jack Poyntz, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. Krux, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Mrs. Sutcliffe, Mrs. Canninge; Bella, Miss Marion Terry; and Naomi Tighe, Mrs. Bancroft.

There will be interest in the statement that among the schoolgirls during this run were the now popular Miss Kate Rorke and Miss Mellon, a daughter of Mrs. Alfred Mellon, both of whom thus first appeared upon the stage.

This revival, instead of resulting in our destruction, as we freely grant it might have done, proved an assurance that the commercial side of our enterprise at least was secured, while the reception it received was worthy any new play, and the demand for seats as vigorous, leaving, indeed, no doubt that this delicate little comedy, fragile in plot, idyllic in treatment, would maintain the position before referred to, of being the most successful of all our plays.

On looking back at a book of engagements, it tells us that May of this year was a busy month, but we need allusion only to things theatrical. On the fifth we went to a morning performance at the

Court Theatre, and for the first time saw Modjeska in *Heartsease*, a version of *La Dame aux Camellias*, in which her acting of the frail heroine—although differently conceived—we thought, rivalled the superb rendering of Sarah Bernhardt. On the seventh, there was a remarkable performance given in French of *L'Aventurière*, when nearly all the parts were taken by English actors, including Mr. Beerbohm Tree and Miss Genevieve Ward, the only exception being M. Marius. The fourteenth brought this note from Irving:

'15*a*, Grafton Street,
Bond Street, W.,
*May* 14, 1880.

'The happiest returns of the day, my dear Bancroft, and may prosperity and happiness always be yours.

'An old engagement obliges me to go to supper, but I'll get away in time for *one* cigar.

'No more, by heaven, for to-morrow is a busy day with both of us.*

'Affectionately yours,
'HENRY IRVING.

'P.S.—I think this pocket-book is very pretty.'

It was about this time that Irving offered me a compliment I have always valued, and but for the strain of work I had undergone, which made me already count the days, like an anxious schoolboy

* In allusion to morning performances the next day.

to the commencement of my holiday, I should have been tempted to accept. He asked me to play Château Renaud, if only for a time, in his intended production of the *Corsican Brothers*, a part I always had a hankering after. Perhaps, before my career as an actor is finally closed, it may be that the pleasure of appearing with my old friend will not be denied me. On a later day came a visit from Sothern, who had just returned to England, but sadly changed. Of course no one could better understand the alteration in the theatre than old Haymarket actors, who always failed to trace how the building could ever have borne its former shape. Sothern was particularly struck with all he saw on either side the curtain, and wished that in his bright days there the house had been as we had made it. We don't remember whether the once far-famed 'Dundreary' ever acted again, but month by month he seemed to lose his strength, and fade away as he sought for health at different seaside places.

Sothern's greatly-altered looks remind me that the illness with which poor Honey was stricken about a year before this time had lately made fierce strides, and news reached us that he was sinking fast. A sad journey to his house to see him once more, and learn how matters stood there, was taken together by three old friends of his, Irving, Toole, and myself. The dear fellow's efforts, when we were at his bedside, to make us understand he knew us all, were very painful. Once we just gathered

that he framed the words 'Sir Frederick,' addressed to me in remembrance of the part I had played with him so many times in *Money*. The next day was his last; and not much longer than twelve months after he stood by my side at John Clarke's grave in Highgate Cemetery, wondering who amongst us would be the next, he joined him there. Poor Honey's long illness, and other troubles, had left his affairs in a melancholy state, which the wonderful charity ever conspicuous among actors for their afflicted brethren relieved by a fund, of which Charles Santley, Henry Irving and I were made trustees.

The scythe of Death was this summer indeed busy in the drama's ranks, for almost directly, and within a brief time of each other, passed away two of its valued literary workers—the courtly veteran, J. R. Planché, who was ever cheery, even when worldly troubles overtook him at the age of eighty, and that accomplished playwright, Tom Taylor.

> 'When down thy vale, unlock'd by midnight thought,
> That loves to wander in thy sunless realms,
> O Death! I stretch my view. What visions rise!
> What triumphs! toils imperial! arts divine!
> In wither'd laurels glide before my sight!
> The melancholy ghosts of dead renown,
> Whispering faint echoes of the world's applause.'

To revert from so sad a subject to the mention of such distinguished followers of Momus as the Coquelins, *aîné* and *cadet*, let me say that these clever brothers saw *School* during this revival. Coquelin afterwards wrote to me:

'CHER MONSIEUR BANCROFT,

'Vous avez un excellent théâtre que vous dirigez en maître . . . et en maître artiste . . . que pouvez vous désirer de plus ?

'Votre ami,

'C. COQUELIN.'

It was pleasant, some years later, to find their impressions published in Paris in *La Vie Humoristique*, from which we extract the following from an account of their visit, admirably written by Coquelin *cadet :*

'Le vrai théâtre de comédie de Londres est le théâtre de Hay-Market que dirige M. Bancroft. Situé au centre de la capitale, il est le rendez-vous de l'aristocratie. La salle est toute pimpante et pleine de goût : un rideau portant, dans un large médaillon fort bien peint, une scène de *l'École du Scandale* de Sheridan, des loges bien aménagées, pas de parterre, comme il sied à un théâtre aristocratique, des stalles vastes et odéoniennes, pas de souffleur—les rôles sont tellement sus par les acteurs, qu'ils ont l'air de les vivre—un orchestre invisible qui joue dans les entr'actes et qui envoie sur cette foule riche des bouffées de valses et de mélodies. On ne peut se faire une idée du charme de cet orchestre caché et le bonheur de ne pas voir les crânes trop luisants et les têtes souvent falotes d'humbles musiciens.

'J'ai assisté, au théâtre de Hay-Market, à une représentation de *School* (l'École) de Robertson.

Je jette un rapide coup d'œil sur ce public britannique : tous les spectateurs en habit noir, cravate blanche ; la plupart des dames en toilettes de soirée.

'J'écoute la pièce, je la vois surtout, la comprenant imparfaitement.

* * * * *

Remembering these words, the clever description of the plot which followed was remarkable.

* * * * *

Les décors sont exécutés de main de maître. C'est le triomphe de l'exactitude.

'Les comédiens sont excellents. M. Bancroft joue dans la pièce un rôle de grand gommeux anglais à monocle, et rien n'égale son élégance et sa stupidité. Madame Bancroft joue la pensionnaire gaie ; cette petite femme est un mélange d'Alphonsine et de Chaumont—gaie, pimpante, mordane et d'une adresse! . . . C'est la *great attraction* du Théâtre de Hay-Market.

'Après, je reviens rapidement en cab ("*Hansom*") à mon hôtel, et je me demande en chemin pourquoi les cabs vont si vite? C'est tout simple : les cabs vont très vite parce que les cochers les poussent derrière.'

There is little more to tell before the season ended. We had resolved, on taking the theatre, by way of compensation for the extra work, to underlet it for some of the autumn months, so that we might extend our holiday. Mr. J. S. Clarke this year

became our tenant, and decided during our absence to produce a new play by Dion Boucicault, called a *Bridal Tour.*

At the end of July Mr. Burnand read the first and second acts of his comedy, and delighted us with his work. No cleverer dialogue had we heard for many a day, while the characters were admirably adapted, it seemed to us, to their proposed exponents. This helped much to cheer our departure for the Engadine ; since the extraordinary success of *School*, the result of which entirely passed all the hopes I had formed of the theatre's possibilities, justified our resuming the run of it, when we began work again in November. The season closed brilliantly. Never was the saying 'A bad beginning makes a good ending' more amply verified. I have told how, on the opening night, some occupants of the second circle were discontented and riotous ; let my postscript on the last night be that they cheered us again and again with cries of 'Come back soon!' On the following evening, Mrs. Bancroft had the pleasure of reading 'Major Namby' at the Lyceum Theatre at the close of Henry Irving's season, and the next morning we started for Pontresina, having the welcome companionship, as a fellow-traveller, of a dear and affectionate friend in J. C. Parkinson, which made our journey memorably happy.

Again we had a hearty welcome to the little village, which was this year for the first time honoured by a visit from the Prince and Princess

Christian, who were accompanied by the two young princes. Mrs. Bancroft had the opportunity of nursing the young Prince Christian during a throat affection, which earned for her from their Royal Highnesses, at the time, the title of 'Dr. Bancroft.'

We yielded to a request to further aid the Church, and having the great advantage of Arthur Cecil's companionship, resolved, in addition to readings, songs, and recitations, to act *The Vicarage*, finding great help also in the presence and good nature of two distinguished musicians, Mr. Shakespeare, and Mr. Goring Thomas; while Mr. Parkinson was pressed into the service for the small part of the Vicar's man-servant, which Mrs. Bancroft rendered more important by writing some additional speeches. The *débutant* was most promising, and, but for a marked career in far different walks of life, might have done worse than have chosen in his youth to be an actor. There were local troubles as to all the money obtained going to the English Church Fund, so we offered to repeat the performance for the *Verschönerungs-Verein* on the following evening.

This was a very successful entertainment, and, as the tickets were ten francs each, realized a large sum, which our treasurer, Dr. Ludwig, the clever and popular Pontresina *medico*, handed over, to the great advantage of both objects. The Prince and Princess Christian honoured us with their presence, and all the available vehicles were chartered by visitors from St. Moritz. A gentleman, who was

staying at the Roseg Hotel, carried a large copy of the programme to the summit of Piz Languard, and there attached it to a pole, earning the title of 'Bill-Poster to the Higher Alps.'

Moderate excursions always satisfied our mountaineering ambition. Mrs. Bancroft was quite contented in having accomplished the Diavolezza tour, while a climb up the easiest of the snow-peaks, Piz Corvatsch, was my chief accomplishment. Some of these excursions this year were made in the companionship of Mr. Parkinson, and one day we all three went together to the Alp Grüm, a visit Mrs. Bancroft shall describe in her own words: 'We started at an early hour, carrying a simple luncheon with us, consisting of substantial sandwiches and wine. Mr. Parkinson, a keen admirer of beautiful scenery, constantly expressed his delight at the views we passed on the way. On reaching the summit, we all sat down on a bench, and while we gazed on the lovely panorama before us, prepared to unpack our lunch. During this operation, Mr. Parkinson, quite lost in admiration of the scene, went into ecstasies, and gave vent to his rapture in words, "Oh, this is indeed divine! *What* a sky! *Look* at that exquisitely peaceful valley, wrapped in rich verdure, and surrounded by those grand, snow-clad mountains. Where is there a painter who can reproduce *such* colours, *such* tints, *such* shadows? No, Nature will *not* be imitated! How *noble* are those rugged peaks; grand, impregnable, defiant!

This is indeed a heavenly spot for romantic meditation." Then, suddenly looking at the lunch, "*Oh, the brutes! I ordered beef, and they've given me ham!*" The transition from poetry to sandwiches was most amusing.'

Such pleasant outings, with 'potters' on the glaciers, filled up the time and brought us to the end of our stay at Pontresina. Refreshed and strong again, all cares and thoughts of theatres cleared with other cobwebs from our heads, we left by carriage for Lucerne, making a pleasant *détour* from Andermatt over the Furka and then to Paris.

How we enjoyed this long holiday! How we delighted in the feeling that Paris, this time, did not mean the end of it! We went about, and saw more of the gay city than we ever had the chance to know before. One day we drove to Père la Chaise, passing on the way the prison of La Roquette, where the guillotine is used, when a French jury has the now rare courage to find no 'extenuating circumstances' to save a culprit from its knife. We, of course, went to gaze upon the tomb of Abelard and Heloise, and other vaults almost as celebrated: then, after wandering in the mid-day heat up and down its countless alleys, we emerged upon the broad main path of the cemetery, at the end of which, above its noble flight of steps, we saw a distant crowd and the figure of a man violently gesticulating in its midst. We thought ourselves indeed in luck; there was evidently a big funeral taking place, and we just in

time to hear one of the customary orations delivered at the obsequies by some eminent Frenchman. We hurried down the path, and up the steep stone steps, hearing, nearer and nearer, the voice of the speaker, and noticing, more and more, the rapt attention of his listeners. Suddenly, as we got quite close, we found to our great surprise that the speech was being made in our own language, and as we panted up the last few steps, exhausted by heat and fatigue, we just caught these words: 'Yes, that is the tomb of the great Cherubini; there lie the remains of the distinguished actor, Talma; and there' (in an undertone, pointing us out) 'are Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, of the Haymarket Theatre!' The crowd consisted of a 'self-conducted' tourist party, and we both felt fit to sink into one of the open graves!

After our stay in Paris, and before fulfilling an intention to visit Malvern, we halted for a few days in London, chiefly to hear Burnand read the third act of his play, which we felt to be considerably behind the other two in merit, and required, we thought, a good deal of altering. The old-fashioned inn, the Foley Arms, so delightfully placed, was our home at Malvern, and we passed a pleasant, quiet time there; part of it being devoted to a mild insight into the mysteries of hydropathy, under the guidance of the amiable successor to Dr. Gully, the high-priest of the water-cure; part to long walks

> 'Round about the Malvern Hills,
> Where man may live as long as he wills;'

charming drives to beautiful Eastnor, to Worcester to see the potteries and Cathedral, and all the country round, in those canary-coloured carriages, as quaint-looking as the drivers in their blue coats and white beaver hats (only exchanged on Sundays for a black one) which the Foley Arms affects; part in receiving and returning early proofs of Burnand's progressing comedy.

Among other letters we received there was one from Arthur Cecil, telling us some of his doings since we parted at Pontresina; an amusing theatrical extract from it shall close this chapter:

'I went to two or three Venetian theatres, but saw nothing very remarkable. There was a fair company at the Goldoni, where they were playing the *Courier of Lyons*. The play-bill was rather funny: there was a line in large type in the middle, not to star any of the actors, or to announce any startling scenic effect, but to advertise the appearance, in the mail-robbing scene, of *Un vivo cavallo!* (a live horse). When he did come on, you never saw such a sorry beast. No old omnibus horse that ever took part in a procession at Astley's was so miserable to look at. His advent on the stage with the mail-cart was heralded by a jingling of bells which sounded like the approach of a whole troop of cavalry. Then there was a sudden pause which suggested difficulties at the wings.

'Eventually the *vivo cavallo*, an undersized and

horribly underfed pony, was dragged on by a man, who preceded him, walking backwards, and was followed by the mail-cart, a vehicle exactly like one of our old *einspänners* from the Engadine, and containing two men who were travelling to Lyons through the night without even the protection of an overcoat. The mail-bag, a very small portmanteau, was then seized upon by the five robbers, who fought over it like dogs after a bone, whilst the *vivo cavallo* took the opportunity of wandering mildly off at the nearest wing. I was telling this story a day or two afterwards to Robert Browning, who explained the matter of the "star" line in the bill by reminding me that a horse is, of course, unique in Venice; and told me that once, on a former visit there, he asked his landlady, a simple old woman, if she had ever seen a horse? "Seen a *horse!*" she repeated a little indignantly, "why, I have seen a cow!"'

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SEASON OF 1880-81.

At the close of our long and delightful holiday we had the curious experience of seeing Robertson's comedy, *Play*, acted by those clever amateurs the 'Windsor Strollers,' at the odd little theatre in the royal borough, since, we hear, destroyed. We distinctly recall the excellent comic acting of Captain Gooch, and the ease and *sang-froid* of Augustus Spalding; while the Hon. Mrs. Wrottesley reminded us strongly of the late Mrs. Frank Matthews, and played with the skill of a practised actress. One of Sir Charles Young's little pieces, called *For Her Child's Sake*, was acted on the same evening by the lamented author and Lady Monckton, who was then justly considered the first amateur of 'leading' parts; she has since proved her undoubted and conspicuous ability, by her admirable performance in *Jim the Penman*, when she joined the professional ranks.

We have never had the pleasure of seeing the other 'crack team,' the 'Old Stagers,' although we

more than once received an invitation for the 'Canterbury Week,' which our holiday abroad compelled us to forego, so we can only regret not knowing, except by hearsay, how clever our old friends Sir Henry de Bathe and Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane are as actors. Quintin Twiss we have seen act several times, and especially recall an amateur pantomime at the Gaiety, called *Herne the Hunter*, rendered memorable by W. S. Gilbert appearing as harlequin, William Yardley as clown, and the veteran Thomas Knox Holmes as pantaloon. Other excellent amateurs whom we have seen on the stage certainly comprise Lady Sebright, Lady Archibald Campbell, the Hon. Alec Yorke, the Ponsonbys, and Charles Colnaghi.

[I (M. E. B.) can well remember Mr. Hollingshead, many years ago, coming to the little green-room of the Strand Theatre to give me a lesson in step-dancing; few people may now know how cleverly he could dance, and I owe many a step to his kind suggestions. I once saw him play pantaloon in a former most successful amateur pantomime, and excellent he was. Before it came off he greatly amused me by his rehearsal on a barrel; and the seriousness with which he persevered until he succeeded in crossing the stage upon it, trundling the barrel along like an acrobat, with his toes, was worthy of the best result. A few years since I also recollect some good acting in the Greek plays so charmingly produced at Lady Freake's 'At Home'—I mean 'at *Homer!*']

While on this subject we may add that many admirable and successful professional actors, who might easily be named, won their spurs on the amateur stage.

We returned to work in November, resuming the run of *School*, and acting also with Arthur Cecil in *The Vicarage*, the dear old-fashioned stay-at-home couple, and the wandering friend who for the time so upsets the tranquillity of their home. The only change in the cast of *School* was in the part of the usher, Krux, which Mr. Brookfield now took in place of Mr. Forbes-Robertson, giving an able but novel reading of the objectionable creature.

Mr. Burnand read his comedy in the green-room a few days afterwards. All sorts of titles had been thought of for the new work, two of which we remember, *Tone* and *The Colonel*. Seldom has heartier laughter at a reading been heard than the bursts which greeted the two first acts, but the comparative weakness of the third was manifest both then and at the subsequent rehearsals. A very elaborate æsthetic scene, and equally telling furniture, with the same characteristics, was prepared, and some of the parts would certainly have been particularly well acted—to judge by the rehearsals, which proceeded daily.

During their progress an unfortunate accident befell us. We were driving a pair of young and rather restive horses, which were giving the coachman some trouble; the weather was bad, and heavy

flakes of snow were falling. While in earnest talk about the play, we suddenly grew conscious that we were going at great speed. This happened in Goodge Street. There one of the horses got a leg over the pole, and in his efforts to extricate himself kicked his companion, and the pair became maddened. We were now nearing Middlesex Hospital. Things grew worse from the state of the wet wooden pavement, and the coachman found himself powerless to pull the horses up, so did his best to save us by driving them into a coal-waggon: this being empty, we cannoned from it, but severely injured the horse that drew it. The concussion, however, stopped the direction of our course, and the poor beasts dashed on to the pavement and into the railings of the private house adjoining the chemist's at the corner of Berners Street. The railings were smashed in, and the stones at their base torn up. Our descent into the area was only prevented by a further flat railing or grating, which enclosed it, still to be found in some old houses. The brougham, by the force of all this, was turned over on its side, which helped to bring the horses, wounded and entangled in their broken harness, to a standstill. After a while, we were dragged out through the window, fortunately unhurt, so far as flesh-wounds went. The coachman was released from a perilous position more frightened than injured, for he never afterwards drove with his previous courage.

Although there was no doctor's bill to pay (if we

may say so without slight to veterinary surgeons), the reaction from the excitement and alarm dwelt on our nerves for some time.

It was singular that this really alarming accident did not reach the newspapers, while a few months previously a broken rein and a consequent but momentary confusion, which was arrested by the prompt action of a policeman (certainly in the heart of town), was placarded in the evening papers almost as soon as the occurrence took place.

It is well to go from grave to gay when one can, so the sequel to this carriage incident shall be told by Mrs. Bancroft: 'I remember my husband, who is very cool-headed in times of peril, putting all the windows down and then holding me very tight until the crash came. With a feeling of thankfulness that we escaped from what might have been, for us, very serious, I will tell what happened afterwards. I was dragged through the carriage-window by a kindly navvy, whose black face almost frightened me out of the poor senses I had left. Mr. Bancroft, whose hat, I may say, resembled a concertina, took me into the chemist's close by, where they were most kind, and gave me a restorative. With difficulty I got through my work that night, for my nerves were completely unstrung. On the following morning, after rehearsal, we walked down Northumberland Avenue to the Thames Embankment, and left orders for the coachman to follow us there. I had by no means recovered from the shock, and was

still dwelling on our lucky escape, when my attention was drawn to an uncovered cart being dragged lazily along by a sleepy-looking horse, driven by a still more sleepy-looking man. Inside the cart sat six very old Chelsea pensioners, on six very old Windsor chairs, three on each side facing one another. They had evidently been sent for an outing, but to judge from the sad expression of their faces, and their weary eyes bent on the bottom of the cart, wondering, perhaps, what they had done to be so shaken about, neither looking to the left nor to the right, they appeared to be more or less indifferent to everything that was going on, looking the picture of resignation to the inevitable. A street arab, who at a glance keenly appreciated the situation, stood gazing at them with open mouth and a threatening twinkle in his eyes; and as this cart-load of melancholy humanity slowly went along, he said, in a whining voice, the tone of which fitted wonderfully to the appearance of these poor soldiers of a long past, "Oh, what a day you're 'aving!" Almost before our smiles had vanished, we saw the carriage approaching, when our countenances suddenly changed, as we asked ourselves, "Where on earth did the horse come from?" The coachman explained that, as our own horses were in hospital, "knowing how nervous I was, he had borrowed a quiet one." I am sure the animal came from some circus; his colour was a sort of rose-pink, he had pale, sleepy eyes, and a long cream-coloured tail—a

horse that would sit down when he heard a German band, from force of habit; his pace was that of the trained steed long accustomed to carry a spangled lady on a decorated flat board like an afternoon tea-table. The carriage was an open one, and I implored to be allowed to get out and walk, for we were already attracting attention, and I feared the comic papers. The poor rose-pink steed was quite calm; no street noises disturbed him, and he was callous to such rude remarks as "Oh! I say, this is a horse wot leans agin' the wall to think!" "'Ere, you with the long tail, a-robbin' the sweepers of their coppers. Why don't you tie it up, mum, with blue ribbon, or send him home to the Zoo?" The circus-like steed took no notice, and, I dare say, thought the boys were but clowns in the ring. Had he seen a hoop, I am sure he would have jumped through it! At last we reached home, and the poor thing was sent back to his native sawdust.'

After several attempts to alter the last act, and even to cut it out altogether, we decided, all our objections being met in the kindest spirit by the author, that Mr. Burnand's comedy was better suited to a smaller theatre than the Haymarket; and shortly after it became the talk of the town at the Prince of Wales's, where *The Colonel* was the means of re-establishing our old home in public favour.

Not finding a new play to suit us among the reams of manuscript we read, we resolved to revive

*Masks and Faces*, which had proved so successful at the Prince of Wales's some five years or so before. An offer to alternate the parts of Triplet and Colley Cibber, as being likely to give some further interest to the performance, was agreed to by Arthur Cecil; so we began the new year by rehearsing the old play on its opening day, and, the cast being nearly a changed one, it was a long time in preparation.

There was terrible weather early in the year: 'Black Tuesday' (January 18, 1881) will be long remembered. On that afternoon we saw one pavement of Regent Street quite clear of snow, while on the opposite side the shops were closed, the drifts of snow being half-way up the shutters; the streets were deserts, and coachmen of all vehicles had a hard time of it. It was weeks before the mounds of snow piled in the squares and other open spots quite disappeared. Naturally all places of amusement suffered very much, and the theatres had their share of empty benches.

In a letter to a friend Mrs. Bancroft thus described the day: 'The cyclone of Tuesday last photographed itself upon my memory and the negative is kept, so that I can reproduce it whenever it may be necessary. It seemed as if Siberia and all the Russias had sent their snow to London, to be added to and piled upon our own. The anxiety was "how shall we manage to struggle to the theatre at night?" But where there's a will there's a way, and although the former was pretty well frozen, and the latter was

blocked up with snow, we turned up at the stage-door in appearance like Father (and Mother) Christmas. Every member of the company reached the theatre safely, several having to come long distances; it was funny to see the various effects the weather had on us: some faces were white, others red, others blue—*I* was all three! *The Vicarage* was the first piece, and when the curtain rose, discovering Mr. Cecil and myself as the Vicar and his wife playing chess, the auditorium presented the strangest picture, but all the same so ludicrous, that I could hardly resist laughing outright. There were seven people in the stalls with topcoats, mufflers, fur cloaks, and large hoods—they must have fancied themselves in sleighs; hardly anyone in the balcony, and the people in the rest of the theatre seemed swathed in shawls, leaving nothing but a row of noses to be seen. How they must have loved the drama to come at all! I could not proceed for a moment, for I saw at once the comic aspect of the situation, and when my gaze met the expression on the faces of the stall-occupants I could not restrain my laughter any longer. I should have much liked to have invited them to tea in the green-room, and have had no performance at all! It was like playing to a dead wall, not a sound of applause or laughter throughout the evening. They might have been figures from Madame Tussaud's! When we started to walk or "thud" home, the expression on both our faces would have been a study for a painter. The snow was coming down fast, in flakes

as big as notes waiting for an answer. We were soon as white as the snow, and looked for all the world like something "doomed for a certain time to walk the earth." When at last we arrived home, we found the coachman with a spade shovelling away the miniature mountains from the front of the house; I suppose he thought we were a part of them, for he nearly shovelled us into the road too, before he discovered that we were his master and mistress.'

If this state of things was trying to the robust, what must it have been to the sick and ailing?

Poor Sothern during all the winter had been wasting very fast. After our return from Malvern we could not fail to see the rapid strides disease had made; and although to the last he looked forward to recovery, it was plainly not to be. He lived then in Vere Street, quite close to us, and we saw him as often as his sad state allowed, for we both were fond of him, and were glad to be among the last of his old friends to grasp his hand. The severe weather, without doubt, put out the flickering flame a little earlier than might have been. He died on the 20th, and a few fast friends went with his remains to Southampton, where, in accordance with his wish, all that is left of the once-courted Edward Askew Sothern lies.

How truly Pope says,

> 'What's fame? A fancied life in others' breath,
> A thing beyond us, ev'n before our death.'

Let us once more recall his merry nature in happier days, and give an instance of Sothern's well-known love of practical joking. The keen enjoyment he derived, even when but a momentary success could crown his unstinted expenditure of either time or money, best proves this. The odd things he would constantly do are difficult to write about, but we will try to relate an instance of a joke, quite harmless in its results, of a kind he thoroughly enjoyed. After acting in Liverpool, he had a spare week before going on to Ireland, which he passed with a friend (as fond of fun as himself) in North Wales, when the two put up at a well-known old inn near Bangor, greatly resorted to by famous anglers.

Sothern soon found out it was the custom for the oldest resident among the guests for the time being to preside at the little *table d'hôte*, over which they talked out their day's sport, and that it was the rule for the chairman always to say grace. The joker one evening learnt by accident, not long before the dinner-hour, that the visitor who had for some days presided had received a telegram which compelled a hurried packing up, and his departure. The spirit of mischief prompted Sothern to send a little note in the name of the landlord to all the other guests, some dozen or fifteen—of course privately and separately—couched in these words: 'Our esteemed president, I regret to say, will not be at dinner this evening. May I venture to request you to have the kindness to say grace in his ab-

sence? The signal for the same will be two sharp knocks upon the sideboard.' This signal, at the proper moment, was of course given by Sothern, who was more than repaid by the glee with which he often told how all the guests rose to a man, as at a word of command, each commencing to pronounce his favourite form of grace; and then, with all sorts of blundering apologies to each other, they resumed their seats.

Not until some time after he had passed away did the following extract from a series of theatrical opinions by Sothern, which appeared in America under the title of *Birds of a Feather*, come to our knowledge:

'Among the actresses, I should certainly place Mrs. Bancroft and Mrs. Kendal in the foremost rank, their specialities being high comedy. Mrs. Bancroft I consider the best actress on the English stage; in fact, I might say on any stage. She commenced her profession as a burlesque actress, and was one of the best we have ever seen in England. When she took the Prince of Wales's Theatre she discarded the burlesque business, and, to the amazement of everyone, proved herself the finest comedy actress in London. Her face, though not essentially pretty, is a mass of intelligence.'

To return to the rehearsals of *Masks and Faces*, which were conducted with all the care bestowed upon a new work. Elaborate dresses were made

from the designs of the Hon. Lewis Wingfield; the scenery and accessories realized the beauties of the eighteenth century, as fully, perhaps, as any of our previous productions; and the revival commenced on Saturday, February 5th, 1881, with the following cast of the familiar characters:

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR CHARLES POMANDER | Mr. H. B. Conway. |
| ERNEST VANE | Mr. Dacre. |
| JAMES QUIN | Mr. Teesdale. |
| COLLEY CIBBER (On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday Evenings.) | Mr. Arthur Cecil. |
| COLLEY CIBBER (On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Evenings.) | Mr. Bancroft. |
| TRIPLET (On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday Evenings.) | Mr. Bancroft. |
| TRIPLET (On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Evenings.) | Mr. Arthur Cecil. |
| MR. SNARL | Mr. Kemble. |
| MR. SOAPER | Mr. C. Brookfield. |
| LYSIMACHUS | Miss Kate Grattan. |
| JAMES BURDOCK | Mr. Stewart Dawson. |
| COLANDER | Mr. E. Smedley. |
| HUNDSDON | Mr. Dean. |
| PEG WOFFINGTON | Mrs. Bancroft. |
| MABEL VANE | Miss Marion Terry. |
| KITTY CLIVE | Miss Wade. |
| MRS. TRIPLET | Mrs. Canninge. |
| ROXALANA | Miss Mabel Grattan. |

The alternation of the part of Triplet was the subject of an admirable comic sketch by Charles Brookfield, depicting the two Triplets, the one lean and hungry, the other in better feather, as both dressed for the part by mistake on the same evening, and meeting on the staircase with these exclamations, 'Really, my dear Arthur!' 'Oh, my goodness, B.!' Dear Arthur, will you forgive us for thinking, whenever we look at this caricature, that you seem too highly nourished for poor half-starved Triplet?

Collectors of correspondence on stage detail will find some interesting letters at this date in the *Daily News* on the subject of our exactitude, which are too voluminous to quote here. We were even able to settle the question of whether or not Roman numerals on the dial of a clock were correct, by speaking of the actual time-piece which Foote presented to the green-room of the old Haymarket Theatre more than a hundred years ago.

[I (S. B. B.) bestowed great thought upon the part of Triplet, and if I may accept the warm praises of the most accomplished critics, I must believe the result was evident in an improved performance on my less-matured attempt in 1875. A more refined view of the character than had, so far as I could learn, been before taken of it, I justify by the delicate treatment Peg Woffington shows Triplet in her charity and help: were he not the broken wreck of a somewhat cultured person, I think the kind-hearted, busy actress would have relieved his wants in a blunter and simpler way.]

The stir made by the performance far eclipsed our first production of the play, and, as with *School,* showed the value of our repertoire. The criticisms, in fact, were one loud chorus of praise. Charles Reade came to see the revival, and it is our impression that the occasion was his last visit to a theatre; he was, as we had always found him, generous in his praise, keen in his judgment, helpful in his criticism.

Before the play commenced, one night we learnt that Mr. Gladstone had stall-seats which were far removed from the stage, and when he found this was so, had asked if anything could be done to place him nearer, as his sense of hearing was becoming less keen. We found the only vacant seats in the house were in the Royal Box, which we begged to place at his disposal. In a day or two came this autograph letter of thanks in generous acknowledgment of so small a politeness :

'10, Downing Street, Whitehall,
*April* 5, 1881.

'DEAR SIR,

'Let me thank you very much for your courtesy in allowing me with my party to occupy a most advantageous post in your theatre on Saturday night. By so doing you secured to me the fulness of a great treat, which otherwise declining powers of sight and hearing would somewhat have impaired.

'For the capital acting of the chief parts I was prepared; but the whole cast, likewise, seemed to me excellent.

'I remain, dear sir,

'Your very faithful and obliged,

'W. E. GLADSTONE.

'S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

The life of that great statesman, Lord Beaconsfield, Gladstone's strongest rival, was at this time

hanging by a thread, and added deeply to our regret at never having known him; but a few weeks before his fatal illness we missed one night, and only by three minutes, the honour of presentation to him. The date of his death, April 19th, is still well remembered. These two great rivals of our day, Disraeli and Gladstone, we have heard both cheered and hooted in their turn by the mob.

Shakespeare, in truth, was 'not for an age, but for all time.' How his words apply to any sometime idol of the crowd! 'There have been many great men that have flattered the people, who never loved them; and there be many that they have loved, they know not wherefore; so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better ground.'

It was in the spring of this year that a rather amusing incident occurred, which may be worth the telling here. When it happened, we were careful to keep it from publicity.

Like most theatrical people, we were tormented by callers at all hours of the day, and long had been obliged to teach our servants to deny us to the band of applicants who looked like stage aspirants or members of the fraternity of the 'great unacted.' One morning, quite early, when the manservant who knew our ways, and had learnt at certain hours to deny us to all comers, had been sent on a message in the neighbourhood, the bell was answered by a foolish housemaid who had no right to attend to its

summons. The girl admitted two ladies, showed them into a room downstairs, and then announced that 'Mrs. Louison wished to see us.' We were very busy at the time, and very angry at the interruption to our work. Knowing no person named Louison, a polite message was sent to the ladies to the effect that 'Mrs. Bancroft regretted she was unable to see them so early without an appointment.' We afterwards heard that when this message was delivered, both the ladies repeated Mrs. Bancroft's name in some surprise, and, after talking together, went away on foot. In the evening a letter was received from Lady Sophia Macnamara, explaining that she was one of the callers in the morning, and had mistaken 31, Cavendish Square, for No. 37, the house of the distinguished dental surgeon, Mr. (now Sir) John Tomes, with whom an appointment had been made for the Princess Louise, on whom she was in waiting, and who was our other visitor, the foolish servant having blundered over the name announced by Lady Sophia. An answer explained the facts of the case from our side, and shortly afterwards, being invited by Sir Edward and Lady Inglefield to the honour of meeting her Royal Highness, to whom Mrs. Bancroft was presented, the Princess laughingly inquired of her 'if she remembered Mrs. Louison?'

There is but little else to tell of this part of the season, as *Masks and Faces* uninterruptedly pursued its career of great attractiveness, which far eclipsed

its earlier success at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; but we linger for a moment on the artistic recollection of some very interesting performances of *Othello* given at the Lyceum, in which Edwin Booth and Henry Irving, in friendly rivalry, alternated the parts of Iago and the Moor; while Drury Lane was visited by the distinguished Meiningen Company of German actors, whom we also saw. We remember most their splendid grouping and management of crowds in *Julius Cæsar*, only Ludwig Barnay's acting as Mark Antony striking us as being of the higher order. We had the pleasure to meet the leading members of the troupe, at a reception given to them shortly afterwards, in the studio of Mr. Boehm, the eminent sculptor, when their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales honoured the gathering with their presence.

This second run of *Masks and Faces* lasted well beyond a hundred nights, and to close the season, a few final representations of *Society* and renewed performances of *Good for Nothing* formed the attraction. This change of programme commenced on June 11th. We announced that the old comedy, which more than fifteen years before had laid the foundation of our success and had not been revived since 1874, would now be acted for the last times under our management, and for a brief period only, the principal parts being taken as follows: Lord Ptarmigant, Mr. Arthur Cecil; Sidney Daryl, Mr. H. B. Conway; Tom Stylus, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. John Chodd,

sen., Mr. Kemble; Mr. John Chodd, jun., Mr. C. Brookfield; Lady Ptarmigant, Mrs. Canninge; and Maud Hetherington, Miss Cavalier.

A very elaborate scene of the London Square was painted by Mr. Hann, and we were glad to find the old comedy stood the lapse of time, and transplanting to the larger stage, far better than was expected. This final performance by us of *Society*—for at the end of it we gave up the rights to the author's children—was full of memories to us both, it having been the lucky stepping-stone to all that followed in our career.

Buckstone's effective comic drama, which so delightfully makes poor Nan a charming heroine, materially strengthened the bill, and was played as in the old Prince of Wales's days two years before.

Apropos of this performance came the following letter from the accomplished German actor of whom we have just spoken:

'8, Craven Street,
*June* 18, 1881.

'HIGHLY HONOURED SIR,

'Allow me to tell you how much I was charmed with yesterday's representation both of *Society* and *Good for Nothing*. I confess I wondered at and admired likewise the perfection of the particular artistic performances, as well as the entire production and the excellent *ensemble*. Receive my hearty thanks for giving me the opportunity of seeing

this representation, which will form a striking point in my London recollections.

'In great esteem,

'Yours,

'LUDWIG BARNAY.

'To S. B. Bancroft, Esq.'

We had, some time before, bought the English rights of a bright little one-act comedy, played by Chaumont as *Lolotte;* and a version, suggested by the story, was very cleverly written for us by Mr. Burnand, under the title of *A Lesson.* This, we resolved, should commence the following season in November, in conjunction with a revival (*faute de mieux*) of Tom Taylor's drama, *Plot and Passion.* These plays were partly got ready before we closed, and, having again let our theatre for an autumn season, we had the curious experience of renewing old memories by once or twice rehearsing on the familiar stage of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, which was kindly offered to us by our tenant, Mr. Bruce, who was still prospering with *The Colonel.*

We may here say that the Prince of Wales's Theatre was subsequently condemned by the authorities, and, after being for some time untenanted, was eventually occupied by the Salvation Army. If ever we are at all near, it is difficult to resist looking at our former home, for a walk in front of it and round about the old stage-door is fertile in remembrances; even to the same butcher in an adjoining

street, who still solicits custom from the passers-by in terms which had often amused us: 'Now then, gather round, ladies—gather round; the finest beef in London: hask the hanimal!' Outside the deserted little theatre we lately read an announcement of an approaching 'send off' to be given to a member of the 'corps,' who was about to visit America. At the foot of the placard were these extraordinary words: 'At 9.30—Ham! Jam! and Hallelujah!'

After an association, as pleasant privately as it was professionally, of many years' duration, at the close of this season, we lost the valuable services of our musical conductor, Mr. Meredith Ball, who obtained an engagement at the Lyceum Theatre, where the season was more extended and without the long vacations we felt we had earned. Mr. Ball, it need not be said, has proved his value to Mr. Irving in many magnificent productions—notably in *Faust*.

A PRACTICAL JOKE BY MR. BANCROFT.

I recall some rare fun we had with Meredith Ball, through my reviving a practical joke, almost as old no doubt as the historical 'Berners Street hoax.' I had a large number of visiting-cards engraved, bearing the name of 'Mr. J. J. Withers,' and for months afterwards, wherever Meredith Ball went, one of these cards would follow him, being left by confederates at his house, or at the theatre by myself, when it was known the caller would not find him. After awhile, the mystery was

increased by such pencilled messages as, 'So sorry to miss you; saw our old Liverpool friends yesterday'—'Unlucky again; will call to-morrow at twelve.' Ball, terribly agitated and puzzled, would confide to us at night that this invisible visitor went between him and his rest, for he prided himself on a good memory, and asserted that he had never known anyone named Withers in his life. All appointments made, of course, were broken, to be followed by another card with an apology, left by me with our hall-keeper, who played conspirator, and who, in answer to searching inquiries as to Withers's personal appearance, gave a vague description, which still hid my identity. Letters soon followed the cards, regretting the writer's ill-luck at not finding 'his old friend;' great indignation on Ball's part at the expression, which culminated in an agony of despair as to who his tormentor could really be, when Withers said in a postscript, 'So you, too, are married, old fellow!' Telegrams followed letters, with the same fun and result; and, after making an appointment at the Crystal Palace, we followed it up by a telegram from Euston, of course signed Withers, expressing his regret at being hurriedly summoned to Liverpool. The next step, in a day or two's time, was a letter, bearing the Liverpool postmark, from 'Mrs. Withers!' explaining that her husband had hurriedly sailed on a business matter for New York, and begged her to express his deep regret at not having yet renewed his old friendship.

Ball's agitation at the whole affair, I am afraid, caused us immense amusement. After a long lapse of time—a year, I think—'J. J. Withers' returned from the States, and again left his card at the theatre and also at Ball's house; the excitement of the unfortunate recipient was once more worked up to fever-heat, and the same sort of fun was again carried on successfully, although broken by a holiday, before Ball, maddened by all sorts of adventures and delays on the part of the ghostly 'J. J. Withers,' succeeded in meeting 'his old friend;' his unsuspicious nature never once being awakened by misgivings. During this holiday, Ball stayed with friends in Leicestershire, to whom he told the story and all its torments. Months afterwards, when he was leading his band in the orchestra of the little Prince of Wales's Theatre one evening, a man came hurriedly to the door, when this conversation took place:

MESSENGER: 'Mr. Ball, there's a gentleman at the stage-door who wants to see you, sir.'

BALL (fully occupied with a delightful operatic selection): 'Go away, I can't speak to you now.'

MESSENGER: 'Very sorry, sir; but the gent says it's most important, and he must see you.'

BALL (taking up his violin, of which he was a master in Costa's band): 'Must see me. Go back and ask the gentleman's name.'

Ball for a few minutes afterwards was lost in the execution of a dreamy solo which, being out of

sight of the audience, he would sometimes play himself, when the man returned and again put his head in at the door.

MESSENGER: 'Beg pardon, Mr. Ball.'

BALL: 'Well?'

MESSENGER: 'The gent says his name is Mr. J. J. Withers, sir.'

BALL (almost dropping his fiddle): 'What!'

MESSENGER: 'Mr. J. J. Withers, sir.'

BALL (still fiddling violently): 'Withers!—at last. Don't let him go. I'll be upstairs in a minute. Shut the door—lock him in—anything—but don't let him escape!'

MESSENGER: 'All right, sir.' (Going away.) 'What's up? Who's this Withers, I wonder?'

Ball hurried the time, brought the selection to an end—threw down his violin—rushed upstairs, and arrived, panting, in the hall, to be received with roars of laughter by—his friend from Leicestershire, who had not forgotten Ball's story of the previous summer, and announced himself for a joke as the shadowy 'J. J. Withers.'

A long, long time afterwards I came across a packet of cards which still bore the name of 'J. J. Withers.' I thought of all the old fun, and that it was unlikely we could again revive it, so I sealed up the cards in a large envelope and addressed them to the theatre, with my compliments, to Meredith Ball. In the evening, our old friend told me with quite a sorrowful voice, and a really saddened look, that *I*

*had shattered the romance of his life!* I hope he has long since forgiven my ruthless act.

The season came to an end with the month of July, and again we were faithful to Pontresina. Again, too, we were fortunate in travelling companions, meeting, on their way to the same destination, Lord Bennet and Arthur Cecil, with whom we recall a pleasant evening in the little inn at Mühlen, where the former, to the latter's accompaniment, by his charming singing of 'Santa Lucia,' stirred such powerful emotions in the breast of the landlord's pretty daughter—which we framed of course as a love-story—that she burst into tears and ran out of the room.

We had a warm welcome from our old hosts, who received us with smiles and bouquets, at the Hôtel Roseg, and a restful stay there. Of the Engadine there is nothing new to tell; the usual visitation from wandering minstrels, Tyrolean vocalists, and travelling conjurers being this year supplemented by an excellent Hungarian band, which performed alternately at the chief hotels at St. Moritz and Pontresina.

Some members of the gipsy troupe chose to value at too great worth a little kindness which we were able to show them, when we have since often come across them in London drawing-rooms, and when they always play a melody we specially liked.

These entertainments were added to by still

another given for the charities by ourselves and friends. Our efforts grew more and more ambitious and dramatic, trying the utmost resources of the Engadine to illustrate, for we not only repeated our performance of *The Vicarage*, but followed it by the amusing scene between Lady Franklin and Mr. Graves from Lord Lytton's comedy *Money*, and also acted *Good for Nothing*.

This entertainment largely increased both funds for which we worked, and the result well repaid the labour of all concerned, which was really considerable. In *The Vicarage* we this year had the experienced aid of an excellent amateur in Mr. Dundas Gardiner on the stage, while another, Mr. Byrom, helped us very much 'behind the scenes,' clearing and re-arranging the stage, in fact, in sight of the audience, for there was no curtain. We also found highly intelligent recruits in an ardent lover of the Engadine, Mr. Arthur Swan, and a young soldier son of Madame Lind Goldschmidt, both of whom aided Arthur Cecil and ourselves very much in making up the cast of the farce, which was admirably played throughout.

When we left Pontresina this year we went down to Italy by the Maloja Pass; breaking the great descent from the high air for one night at a new hotel, and kind of half-way house, built evidently for the purpose, at Promontogno. In the morning we drove past the frontier at Castasegna, where the *douane* is, and on to Colico; there we caught the

boat for Cadenabbia, and in its olive groves we dreamed away another fragment of repose.

In the words of Longfellow, who wrote them of this enchanting spot :

> 'I ask myself, Is this a dream?
> Will it all vanish into air?
> Is there a land of such supreme
> And perfect beauty anywhere?'

Seated one night by the little quay in front of the Hôtel Belle Vue, when the lake was bathed in moonlight, which wrought to the full its romantic influence, we were told a little story of its fascination in something like these words :

'It is five-and-twenty years since I first visited the Lake of Como, and I come to it again and again whenever I can do so. The first time I was here I fell into conversation with a stranger who was then what I am now, a middle-aged Englishman, whom I had met on one of the boats. He told me that it was then twenty-five years since he had known the lake—when he was a youngster enjoying a holiday before joining his regiment, to which he had just been gazetted, in India. He fell ill with fever during his first year of service, and was sent home on sick leave. He disembarked at some port in the Mediterranean, resolved to take the Lake of Como for a brief visit on his way to his own country. Bewitched by its beauties more and more, he lingered on, till at last he felt how little of his leave would remain for home and friends. England, he added, he found so

cold and sunless, while his beloved lake acted so powerfully as a magnet as to draw him back to pass there the brief remnant of his leave. I came,' said the soldier, 'as fast as I could get here, being miserly over every hour I had left to me for indulgence in its fascination. One day, quite soon, I met an Italian girl with whom I fell desperately in love. In a few words I'll tell you my life and history since I proposed to her—I was accepted; I resigned my commission; I married; I bought a villa on the shores of Como; I've lived there ever since; and here,' pointing to a handsome lad of some twenty years, 'comes my son. Let me present him.'

There was a pretty regatta at Cadenabbia during our stay, which was rendered bright also by many pleasant talks with the Marquis d'Azeglio, formerly so well known as Italian Minister to our Court, and with whom we had a slight acquaintance before in England. We went away by Menaggio to Lugano, where (we think it was this year, but may be wrong in its date) we found a friend in the Rev. Henry White, of the Savoy Chapel Royal, who was enjoying his holiday as chaplain there. The St. Gothard railway was still unopened, though fast approaching completion, so we thought we would, for the last time, cross the pass by road, and go home by Lucerne and Paris. We were well repaid by seeing the wondrous viaducts in progress, and the bewildering curves in and out of its corkscrew tunnels.

ON THE SEA AND IN THE EAST, BY S. B. B.

Our holiday was far from ended. As I had arranged to take a trip to Constantinople, chiefly for the sake of a sea-voyage in the delightful companionship of J. C. Parkinson, Mrs. Bancroft deciding meanwhile to renew her acquaintance with Malvern, my pen must, unaided, travel to the end of this chapter, to describe 'fresh fields and pastures new.' Some items of our experiences, I hope, will not be without interest.

We took passage for Malta in the P. and O. steamship *Deccan*, and by the great kindness of our friend Mr. Sutherland (now M.P. for Greenock), the chairman of the company, were allowed the privilege of two of her officers' cabins on deck. Before we sailed, Mrs. Bancroft went with me one day to go over the ship and lunch with the captain and officers. The visit, I regret to say, seemed only to confirm her terror of the sea, 'and all that therein is.' She preferred the bracing air and hills of Malvern to the possibilities of the Channel, and more especially the Bay of Biscay.

On September 28th, we sailed from Southampton. The pilot, when he left us, bore a little bundle of parting telegrams, and then came the peace given only by the sea. My friend Parkinson lived in the chief officer's cabin, while I occupied the doctor's sanctum. Although the space and privacy this concession gave were highly valued, truth compels me to tell the luxury was not an unmixed blessing, for just outside my door there was a kind of poultry-yard,

the feathered occupants of which never failed to remind me of their existence in the early hours, while, periodically, their short span of life was noisily shortened for table purposes. Very close, and also within view, was the slaughter-house and home of the ship's butcher! So the intending traveller by sea will learn there are many considerations in the choice of a deck-cabin. The greatest question of all, however—the weather—was solved quite in our favour. The dreaded Bay was almost pond-like, and the knot of fellow-passengers whom we chummed with—chiefly soldiers and civil servants returning from 'leave' to India—cordial and friendly; the picturesque surroundings of ayahs, seedie boys, coolies, negroes, lascars, and Chinamen being new to me, although familiar enough to so tried an Eastern traveller as my companion, and often described by his graphic pen. There was also a handsome but wicked-looking syce (I think that is the correct name for a groom in India) on board, who was in charge of two blood-horses which he was taking out to his master, the Rajah of somewhere. The man, I remember, wore rings on some of his toes, and silver ornaments screwed through his nostrils. This trip was of wonderful service in furnishing me with all kinds of detail for a proposed revival we contemplated, in time of need, of the old Haymarket comedy, the *Overland Route*, and I did not fail to observe all that passed around me, taking copious notes, and making rough drawings

of much that was enacted in the way of life on ship-board.

We reached Gibraltar at noon on the Sunday after we sailed, and, having to remain some hours in harbour for coaling purposes, after going through the *pratique* ceremony, we spent the time on shore. The heat was intense, and the parched air in strong contrast to the breezes that followed our floating home. After a halt at the telegraph-office to let our belongings know that all was well, and a visit to the English club, where we devoured, as travellers only can, a file of the *Times*, we inspected all that we could see, in the hours at our disposal, of England's wonderful possession, which breathes 'Rule Britannia' at every turn one takes, and still had time to drive to the Spanish lines, and through a neighbouring village before rejoining our ship. When we reached her deck I learnt another lesson- my cabin was on the coaling side, and I had not shut the window!

In lovely weather still, which grew appreciably hotter day by day, we sailed for Malta.

Soon the piano was hoisted from the saloon to the upper-deck, where ladies played or sang, and where small impromptu dances were indulged in by those inclined that way. The days went quickly by, and we were very close to Malta before I felt the smallest wish to resign a meal. My last breakfast on board the *Deccan* proved, I confess, a trouble to me, and I was reminded that *la mer*, with the privilege of her sex, gave indications of a change of

temper. Nothing serious, however, happened before we said good-bye to our friends on board, and were rowed ashore as the majestic troopship *Jumna* moved slowly from the harbour on her road to India.

The value of Malta to us is, perhaps, hardly appreciated by those who have never seen the island or the Mediterranean. I know that the sight of it very much impressed my mind. Our visit was most interesting, although limited to two days and a night, for into that brief time we crowded much experience. Being made free of the English club, we had another chance of knowing something of the world's doings. Of course we bought lace and silver things in the Strada Reale, and saw the Church of the Knights of St. John; but our most interesting excursion was to a monastery, of which I forget the name, although I remember well being shown the vaults where dead monks, like mummies, were propped up in niches, and the calm smile of the brother who escorted us when he pointed to a vacant space which he explained was waiting so for him. He was an old man then, so perhaps his time may have already come to be placed there.

Our pleasant stay at Malta was cut short by hurried news that the Cunard ship *Cherbourg*, in which we had booked a cabin for Constantinople, would sail earlier than was expected; so we packed in haste and got on board at nightfall with little time to spare.

The weather had distinctly changed, and for the worse. A vile wind, called the sirocco, made things wretched for the time, especially to those who, like myself, can only be called fine-weather sailors.

All the next day I was in my berth, my frame of mind being only known by sufferers from sea-sickness. In a spirit far removed from any thought of boasting, but of perfect thankfulness, it may be of some interest to state that this day and another day in 1858, and also from the same cause when I crossed the Atlantic, are the only days since my early boyhood that I have passed in bed. Many a time I dare say I should have been wiser to have stayed there, but I have always struggled against small illnesses, having often acted when in pain, and often, too, in sorrow.

On the following morning my friend Parkinson conquered my demoralized state, and helped me, in a condition of eccentric dishabille, to reach the deck; there I remained throughout the day, and soon was well again. Our life was very changed from the routine of the *Deccan*—all was now on a much smaller scale, and by no means so amusing; there was but a mere handful of passengers, while we carried heavy cargo, which we learnt would necessitate delays at Syra and Smyrna before we reached Constantinople. Our chief amusement was listening to marvellous yarns spun by one of the officers, who owed to his Munchausen-like proclivities the name we always knew him by—'The

Baron.' The *Cherbourg* was one of the smaller vessels of the Cunard fleet, and, by comparison with the big P. and O. steamer we had quitted, and the frequency with which we had the chief deck all to ourselves, we might have been on a large steam yacht. In beautiful weather we passed through a sort of network, to judge by the charts, of Grecian islands, and anchored at daybreak one morning in the bay off Syra. Parkinson and I at once were rowed ashore to see the picturesque little city, which ranks second in importance, I believe, in the Greek kingdom. We caught sight of a small boy who, as he walked down the chief street, affixed here and there upon the walls a brief announcement printed on note-paper with a mourning edge. Upon inspection, we gathered that it referred to a funeral to take place that day. Later on two Greek ladies, fellow-passengers, also came ashore, and we found the ceremony was about to be held in the cathedral, so we resolved to go there and see the rites; on our way a little crowd attracted our attention, and we found ourselves outside the home of the deceased—an old lady who had only died that morning. Soon her body was carried forth by sailors upon an open bier, and, as it passed, some people came out upon the house-tops, and cast vessels of water on the ground between the corpse and those who followed it to the grave. This was explained to us as an old Eastern superstition, its purport being to keep death away from the survivors; we were also told that the

dress in which the poor, coffinless body was clothed was most likely the result of the savings of a lifetime. We followed, full of reflections, to the handsome church, where many priests, clad in the gorgeous garments of the Greek ritual, surrounded by the mourners and the bearers of handsome censers, received the dead with chants, and fulfilled the last obsequies; one of the dignitaries seemed throughout the ceremony to keep an eye upon us, but I have every hope that our behaviour was quite decorous while, like all present, we stood round the bier, and carried in our hands long lighted candles. When all was over our thoughts were brought back to a strong sense of this world's smallness by the unseemly haste displayed in extinguishing the said candles; for, with marvellous dexterity, two creatures had blown the whole large number out almost before the body had been carried from the building.

There was still more cargo to discharge, or else some to take on board, when the night fell, so we remained at anchor in the harbour, our vexation at the delay being little assuaged by the sight of burning mills, which caught fire soon afterwards. These mills were built upon some heights, and the flames with much grandeur lighted up the city and the shipping which reposed in its little bay.

Soon we were at Smyrna, and, again delayed by cargo, we went on shore: certainly we had seen nothing so Eastern as the sight the quays presented.

We found types of every race and nation in all the picturesqueness taught by some remembrance of the 'Arabian Nights.' Caravans on their way with their troops of camels, merchants and pilgrims, and many countenances whose owners looked like murderers or thieves. We made straight for our Consul, and were much indebted to his kindness; he was a cheery, good-looking old gentleman, and warned us strongly not to go to Ephesus, as its neighbourhood was at the time infested by bandits. Had I disobeyed the kind advice, what a chance might have been given for sensation paragraphs, headed in the London newspapers 'An Actor's Ransom'! Our friend urged us by all means to quit the quays well before nightfall; and so that we might see the bazaars in safety, he sent us through them under the care of his own *cavass*, a handsome petticoated Greek, who recalled Byron's corsair to my mind, with his sash and girdle one mass of pistols, swords, and daggers, somewhat interfered with by a prosaic umbrella. Under this escort we went fearlessly where otherwise we never should have ventured to intrude. We also followed the wise counsel of our new-found friend, and slept on board.

Irritated in the morning at seeing the mass of cargo still to be stowed away, and a little tired of the stories of the modern Munchausen, we resolved to tranship to a Russian steamer sailing that afternoon for Constantinople, and to quit the *Cherbourg*. All this, with a little strategy, was briefly done. We

soon found ourselves on board the *Nahimoff*, and the proud possessors of a state cabin containing two iron bedsteads—luxuries till then unknown to us at sea.

After an excellent dinner and tasting tea really *à la Russe*, we went on the lower deck, and, in the moonlight, made the tour of its picturesque-looking native occupants; for your Easterns spend but little on transit—most of the travellers, in fact, carried their own bedding, or were contented with the hospitality of a prayer-carpet.

We saw wonderful groups of humanity huddled patiently together, sometimes in the open, sometimes under improvised tents; and before turning in to our more refined quarters, had a pleasant talk with the captain, who proved to be an Irishman by birth, though naturalized as a Russian, who owned the British name of Thomas.

Our sojourn on this ship, if all went well, was only to extend to forty hours; and cheerfully enough they passed away, there being much to watch, when we were up and about next day, in the movements of our humbler travelling-companions, whose lives on deck were so *en évidence*. Among them, to our amazement, we found an officer of some rank in the Turkish army, who travelled with his own bed, and packed it up himself; while all the way from Smyrna to Constantinople he removed no clothing but his boots, and lived entirely, throughout both days, on scraps of cheese and olives. The well-known repu-

tation of the Turks as soldiers, if well led, is doubtless a little due to the small amount of food they want, even in hardship. 'Tommy Atkins,' I fancy, must have his commissariat better supplied. So far as we could see and judge, no single soul on board, except the few who travelled at first-class fares and ate and drank in the saloon, spent a single coin. One and all seemed to carry with them, in a sort of gipsy fashion, everything they wanted, and showed no sign of irritation or fatigue. When morning came they calmly stowed away their bedding; and when evening fell, before remaking it, they sedately spread their prayer-carpets and went through their orisons, unmindful of the gaze of the benighted. My thought as I again went to bed was what on earth would happen to them all if a storm came on! Would such a visitation, I wonder, have ruffled their seeming stoicism?

After a short agony as to the load of humanity on board interfering with a clean bill of health, and bitter thoughts of possible quarantine, we steamed down the Bosphorus at an early hour. The morning mists fortunately dispersed in time to show us the wonderful view as we approached Constantinople —a view described so often and so ably that I shall not attempt to paint the picture of its mosques and minarets, its towers and temples, glittering in the Eastern sun.

When we landed, disenchantment came. Our quarters were at Missiri's during our short visit, and

we carried away no particular remembrance of its comfort. A guide, who proved an amusing rascal with a strong belief in the powers of 'backsheesh,' was engaged, and a few days were devoted to hard sight-seeing. We ascended the Galata Tower, from which the sight well repays the toil; we 'did' Santa Sophia and other mosques until we were tired of taking off our boots, and shambling in ill-fitting slippers on the marble floors; we saw and marvelled at both the dancing and the howling dervishes; we rowed in a *caïque* on the Golden Horn; we bought bad cigarettes in the Grande Rue of Pera (which, to my thinking, is very like a street in a third-rate Italian town, with nothing but the fez to bespeak the East); we thought the bazaars of Stamboul very inferior to those we had visited at Smyrna; we went to a music-hall with the British Consul, who was most kind to us, and found the stage occupied by English artists well known at the Oxford or the Alhambra; we enjoyed the hospitality of the English Club, where we saw our friend the Turkish officer as a guest, looking furtively at our table, we thought, and guessing how much we remembered of the cheese and olives; we saw the crowds of scarred street-dogs, and heard their howls too often in the night; we were jolted to death in the vilest vehicles over the worst-paved roads I have ever seen or read of; in a word, we rushed about from place to place and saw much that lies between Stamboul and Therapia, including a sweet

and peaceful reminder of home in the green and well-kept cemetery, with its English custodian, on the heights of Scutari, where lie the graves of many of our Crimean heroes.

Invitations to dinner, and one to a soirée and some amateur theatricals given at the summer residence of the British Embassy at Therapia, reached me, which were all the pleasanter as I bore no letters of introduction. I could not accept them, for it was 'the sea, the sea, the open sea,' I wanted, and, my time being limited, I took passage for Marseilles in one of the Messagerie Impériale line of steamers. The voyage, alas, had to be made alone, for Parkinson was not, like me, tied to dates, and had resolved to ramble on. My old friend saw me off, and, as he was rowed back to the shore, I felt very like the returning schoolboy of my youth, who waves his adieux with ghastly smiles, which vainly try to mask his deep emotions, as those dear to him fade further from his view.

This six days' voyage in the *Provence* was strong in contrast to the time I had passed on board the *Deccan*. Of the two services I preferred the English line, although many frequent travellers in the Mediterranean think otherwise. I was unfortunate with regard to our stopping-places, as we were anchored off the Piræus in the middle of the night (I remember being at once woke up by the silence of the engines), and reached the Bay of Naples at an hour too late to go ashore; although even then our deck swarmed

with vendors of goods in mock coral and doubtful tortoise-shell, than which a few stale English newspapers were much more in request. The number of my fellow-passengers was limited; they included, however, two Englishmen, a Q.C. and a doctor, with whom I chummed, which partly passed the time, the rest being given up to studying the part of Fouché for our coming performance of *Plot and Passion*. The weather throughout was good, and the shores of the Riviera looked very beautiful as we neared our destination. I could hardly believe, as I thought over all I had seen, that I had been but four short weeks away from England.

After the delights of the *douane* at Marseilles, there was yet time for a drive through the town before starting for Paris by the night express. Although it was now the end of October the trees in the chief streets were still thickly clad with autumn leaves, and French gaiety reigned in the pretty shops and on the handsome boulevards. As we travelled northwards, a few hours later, we grew rapidly conscious of great change in the temperature. At Lyons one positively shivered, and the arrival in Paris at daybreak on a wintry morning was in strong contrast to the Mediterranean heat of the day before.

Paris playbills at this time included *Le Monde ou l'on s'ennuie*, with its almost ideal original cast, at the Français, and *Divorçons*, with the humorous acting of Chaumont and Daubray, at the Palais Royal.

I also learnt much about Sardou's coming play at the Vaudeville, before my return home, after an absence of thirty-three days, to take up the rehearsals of *Plot and Passion*. During these final preparations came the *première* of *Odette*, for which I crossed the Channel again on a night I shall not readily forget; the weather at Dover Town Station was described, in answer to the anxious question of a fellow-traveller in the same compartment, as 'very dirty.' I guessed what this might mean, for it was raining in torrents and blowing hard; as I reached the gangway the deck of the steamer seemed to be looking at me; one moment's hesitation between a bed at the Lord Warden or continuing my journey ended in the latter choice. There was no private cabin to be had for love or money; the brief delay in learning this was long enough to fill the saloon below, where, however, I found one vacant sofa, and still can hear the groans of a fat Frenchman, who was my nearest neighbour. We all passed an odious time, and I was not sorry to be at last safely landed at the Mirabeau.

Sardou's play proved greatly successful, the opening and closing acts especially so; the first act, indeed, is a play complete in itself, and one of the most powerful the great dramatist ever wrote. At its close I remember the chorus of voices in the *couloirs*—'La pièce est finie! Qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire?' In spite of this, and many apparent difficulties in adapting it to the English stage, I bought the

right to do our best with it. That fine actor, Adolphe Dupuis, although a little old for his character, and Blanche Pierson, carried off the honours, Maria Legault being charming as the *ingénue*.

The old proverb was once more true—the storm was followed by a calm, and when I recrossed the *Manche*, it was as hushed and silent as a lake.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SEASON OF 1881-82.

With regard to the elements, we have often been unlucky on our opening nights, and this year were more so than usual, for the 26th of November was most tempestuous; throughout the evening the sound of the storm penetrated to the theatre; the large ventilator over the sunlight, and smaller ones above the gallery ceiling, groaned and rattled as the hurricane of wind whirled them round and round, shaking their safety. When the audience assembled it could not have been in a cheerful frame of mind. Whether the drama, or the actors, or the spectators were one or the other, or all three, a little dull, does not much matter now, but as truthful chroniclers, we must not claim *Plot and Passion* to rank with our best successes.

An interesting reference to the criticism which appeared in the *Times* on the original production of this play, in some of the brightest days the Olympic Theatre ever knew, divulged the fact that it was then thought heavy. A few brief sentences of

praise were given to the acting of Mrs. Stirling and Alfred Wigan as Madame de Fontanges and Henri de Neuville; a larger meed to the creation of Desmarets by Robson; while Emery's performance of Fouché was not even mentioned. The novelty in our programme, which followed *Plot and Passion*, fortunately made amends, and was most warmly received. Mr. Burnand was unable to be present on the first night of his clever little play, but wrote a letter on the following day, which will confirm our impressions of the elements, and which we hope he will forgive us for printing as a sequel to an extract from the play-bill.

This was our cast of *Plot and Passion*, for which, it should be mentioned, very effective costumes were designed by the Hon. Lewis Wingfield:

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|---|---|
| JOSEPH FOUCHÉ, DUKE OF OTRANTO | MR. BANCROFT. |
| MARQUIS DE CEVENNES | MR. PINERO. |
| BERTHIER, THE GRAND CHAMBERLAIN | MR. TEESDALE. |
| HENRI DE NEUVILLE | MR. H. B. CONWAY. |
| MAXIMILIAN DESMARETS | MR. ARTHUR CECIL. |
| GRISBOULLE | MR. STEWART DAWSON. |
| JABOT | MR. DEAN. |
| MARIE DE FONTANGES | MISS ADA CAVENDISH. |
| CECILE | MISS AUGUSTA WILTON. |

After the drama was played for the first time *A Lesson*, a new comedy in one act (founded on *Lolotte*), written by Mr. F. C. Burnand:

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR THOMAS DUNCAN | MR. C. BROOKFIELD |
| MR. WENTWORTH | MR. H. B. CONWAY. |
| LADY DUNCAN | MISS BLANCHE HENRI. |
| MARKHAM | MISS WARDEN. |
| MISS KATE REEVE (*of the Theatres Royal*) | MRS. BANCROFT. |

'18, Royal Crescent, Ramsgate,
*November* 27, 1881.

'My dear Mrs. Bancroft,

'Excuse the style of this letter, for after such a fearful night *here*, not at the Haymarket, I write with (a pen—yes) *several tiles off!!* I sincerely congratulate you upon what appears from the *Observer* to have been a Big Success with a very Small Piece. We came down here to rest and be thankful. We did not rest, and we are not thankful. Such a gale! The centre part of the crescent veranda at the back blown right down, and the doors blockaded; chimneys nowhere; wrecks—alas! everywhere. Tugs and lifeboats in full employ. "A night for crossing!" Well, to some it was a night for crossing themselves and saying their prayers, for we thought that Mother Shipton's prophecies had come true, and there was an end of everything, as there is to this letter. Wife and self immensely pleased. We thought of you at 10 and 10.30 last night, and wondered.

'Yours very truly,
'F. C. Burnand.'

A few days afterwards, and while our minds were agitated as to the enduring capacity of *Plot and Passion*—that long-looked-for treasure, a good original play, not having fallen into our hands, and there being some months to face before the version of Sardou's *Odette* could possibly be ready for pro-

duction—we received a visit from Mrs. Labouchere, who confirmed some rumours, which had already appeared in print, apropos of a performance for a charity in which she had taken part at Twickenham, announcing Mrs. Langtry's determination to go upon the stage, and, if her *début* warranted her hopes, to follow the calling of an actress. Mrs. Labouchere asked if we would allow this experiment to be made at the Haymarket Theatre in an afternoon performance, to be given in aid of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, when Mrs. Langtry proposed to appear as Miss Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*, in which part Mrs. Labouchere was already engaged in coaching her. We took a day to reflect and weigh the many *pros* and *cons* the startling proposition involved. We knew that our refusal would be followed by immediate acquiescence at another theatre, while we also felt that the extraordinary career of popularity which had been Mrs. Langtry's lot for several London seasons must have destroyed all fear of complete failure, for the ordeal of 'facing the public' had already been often and gracefully passed through, and rendered composure almost a certainty, so our decision was to announce the performance to take place on the 15th of December: the prices of admission being arranged so as to serve the Charity in a material way. Never, perhaps, was a theatre more besieged for seats. All sections of society fought for places, and loud were the lamentations in many a

high quarter where non-success had followed every effort to procure them.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Langtry, with quiet confidence, pursued her rehearsals, and public excitement to be present at this exceptional *début* reached fever heat. Even the late Abraham Hayward, acquaintance with whose wit and anecdote we had first made at the table of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, shared it so far as to write a criticism on the event for the *Times*. Following a tardy application for a seat for this purpose, and our regretful reply that the card had been sent in the usual way to the editor for the use of the dramatic critic, came this letter:

'8, St. James's Street,
*December* 15, 10 *a.m.*

'DEAR MR. BANCROFT,

'I have agreed with Chenery (editor of the *Times*) to write the notice. I know nothing of Mr. ——, but I have a stall, given me by a lady.

'Believe me,

'Faithfully yours,

'A. HAYWARD.'

Before an audience which included the Prince and Princess of Wales, and representatives of great distinction in fashion, art, and literature, the performance took place. We occupied the novel position of witnessing it from the stalls of our own theatre. Mrs. Langtry was very quietly received upon her first entrance, but the audience gradually thawed

towards her, and it was generally agreed that the effort was one of marked ability and promise. With regard to its substantial result to the Theatrical Fund—the bribes and efforts to obtain seats at any cost being throughout disregarded, and the advertised prices strictly adhered to—we had the pleasure of handing the secretary £430.

Mr. Hayward's criticisms contained so many interesting remarks, almost historical, concerning Goldsmith's comedy, that we reprint an extract from it :

'The company who, with the aid of a social celebrity, performed *She Stoops to Conquer* at the Haymarket Theatre yesterday afternoon were engaged in an undertaking bolder and more hazardous than they, perchance, anticipated. There is hardly a play the reception of which is more dependent upon acting and management, upon the ever-changeable temper of the audience, and to a certain degree on accident, than this famous comedy. The improbabilities of the plot are self-evident, and the principal characters require the most delicate handling to prevent them over-stepping the bounds of truth, nature, and propriety. The young squire, the mother's darling, verges on caricature ; the forwardness of the heroine in securing a husband must be carefully shaded not to be declared out of keeping in a well-bred young lady ; and it is difficult to conceive a young man of birth, cultivation, and refinement like Young Marlow swaggering like a bagman

and taking rude liberties with a decent young woman whom he was too shy to look in the face when he supposed her to belong to his own class in life.

'It was only after numerous difficulties and delays that the comedy was brought out on March 15, 1773, at Covent Garden, then under the management of Coleman, who foretold a failure. His fears or doubts were contagious. "Gentleman" Smith threw up Young Marlow; Woodward refused Tony Lumpkin; Mrs. Abingdon (the unkindest cut of all) declined Miss Hardcastle. So alarming was the defection, that some of Goldsmith's friends urged withdrawal, or at the least postponement. "No," he gallantly replied, "I'd rather my play were damned by bad acting than merely saved by good." He was wrong there. His play was saved by good acting, and would most assuredly have been damned by bad.

'On March 22, 1773, Walpole writes thus to Lady Ossory:

'"What play makes you laugh very much, and yet is a very wretched comedy? Dr. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Stoops, indeed—so she does; that is, the Muse. She is draggled up to the knees, and has trudged, I believe, from Southwark Fair. The whole view of the piece is low humour, and no humour in it. All the merit is in the situations, which are comic; the heroine has no more modesty than Lady Bridget, and the author's wit is as much *manqué* as the lady's."

'Danger and difficulty enhance the pleasure and

merit of success. When we say that yesterday's representation was eminently successful, we are paying the highest compliment to the performers who principally contributed to this result. Foremost among these was Mrs. Langtry, who, it would be affectation to conceal, was the grand attraction of the piece. High-raised as the general expectations might have been, they were not disappointed. Even those who came only to look will admit that they had their money's worth. Exquisite purity of complexion (remarkable in this lady) unaided by art is apt to become paleness on the stage; the brightest of eyes are not seen to advantage across the footlights, but the finely-shaped head, the classic profile, the winning expression of the features, the fascinating smile, the musical laugh, the grace of the figure—"a full flowing roundness inclining to length"—these are gifts which the public in a theatre can appreciate as well as the privileged admirers in a drawing-room.

'The audience evidently came prepared to make every possible allowance, but none whatever was required, so far as she was concerned. The oldest playgoers, who had seen half a dozen Miss Hardcastles, were astonished at the ease with which she glided into the part, the accuracy of the conception, and the felicity of the execution throughout.'

Frequent conversations with Mrs. Langtry convinced us of her earnest intention to play with all

seriousness and desperation for an important stake, and we agreed upon the terms of an engagement until April, which month we had fixed for our production of *Odette*, having in the meantime been so fortunate as to induce Madame Modjeska, who was passing through London on her way to act in Poland, to accept the part of the heroine and to return for the rehearsals of the play as soon as she was free.

Without gratifying a very pardonable curiosity as to the terms of our contract with Mrs. Langtry, we may say there was nothing ridiculous about it. Mrs. Langtry was good enough to think her appearance at our theatre, and the help she would receive, as of the first importance, and, of her own accord, refused other dazzling proposals with which she was deluged.

We fixed upon the pretty part of Blanche Haye in Robertson's comedy *Ours* for Mrs. Langtry's professional appearance, the character being one that was aided by her great natural gifts, and not calling for too many prospective qualities; while she would be helped in turn, throughout the play, by prominent members of the company. During the rehearsals, the following words accompanied a little *cadeau* to Mrs. Bancroft: 'With real affection from your pupil (*dull*, but grateful for the pains taken with her).—Lillie Langtry.'

Let us at once say that we have never seen reason to regret having been the means of introducing Mrs. Langtry to the profession in which she has now for

years been so earnest a worker as to achieve success far beyond that derived from mere curiosity. She was, besides, so apt and zealous a pupil as to render it a pleasure to help her to success, and her three months' engagement remains among our bright recollections of the Haymarket. These performances commenced on Thursday, January 19th, and evoked an extraordinary degree of public curiosity. The cast of *Ours* was as follows : Prince Perovsky, Mr. Arthur Cecil ; Sir Alexander Shendryn, Mr. Pinero ; Angus MacAlister, Mr. H. B. Conway ; Hugh Chalcot, Mr. Bancroft ; Sergeant Jones, Mr. C. Brookfield ; Lady Shendryn, Miss Le Thiere ; Blanche Haye, Mrs. Langtry ; and Mary Netley, Mrs. Bancroft. Morning performances of Goldsmith's comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and Mr. Burnand's new comedy were given every Thursday, and of *Ours* every Saturday. The playbill also contained the following announcement : ' Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft beg to state that their rights in the Robertson comedies will shortly expire. *Ours*, *Caste*, and *School*, therefore, can only be played again for a fixed number of nights under their management, as opportunities may arise, and will then cease to form part of their repertoire.'

Our cast of Goldsmith's fine old play, which was rehearsed in a great hurry, did not seem to us to present any particular or distinctive merit, with the exception of what we always thought a remarkable performance of the small part of Diggory by Mr. Pinero.

NOTES BY MR. BANCROFT.

An invitation from the Prince of Wales to some of the leading London actors, to have the honour of dining at Marlborough House on the evening of February 19th, was among the many gracious acts by which his Royal Highness has honoured, and endeared himself to, the theatrical profession. On this occasion I learnt for the first time that our management—then about seventeen years old—had outlived all former co-existing ones; and as the *doyen* in length of service, though not in years, I found myself honoured by being placed on the right hand of our Royal host. During dinner I counted that the table was laid for thirty-eight, and although I then kept no record, I think I can trust my memory to recall the names of those present. Some imperfect lists of the guests, I know, were published at the time the compliment was paid, so this may be thought a proper opportunity to make the bare record correct: The Prince of Wales, Prince Leiningen, the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Lytton, Lord Fife, the late Lords Aylesford and Torrington, Lord Londesborough, Lord Carrington, Sir George Wombwell, Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane, Sir Dighton Probyn, Mr. (now Sir) Francis Knollys, Mr. Tyrwhitt-Wilson, Colonel Farquharson, Mr. H. Calcraft, Mr. Charles Hall, Mr. E. F. S. Pigott, Mr. W. H. Russell, Mr. George Augustus Sala, Mr. F. C. Burnand, Mr. George Lewis, Mr. Hollingshead, Mr. Henry Irving, Mr. Hare, Mr. Coghlan, Mr. Kendal, Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mr. John Clayton, Mr.

David James, Mr. George Grossmith, Mr. Edgar Bruce, Mr. Lionel Brough, Mr. Henry Neville, Mr. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Charles Wyndham, Mr. J. L. Toole, and myself. Mr. Byron, I remember, had also the honour of being invited; but, unhappily, the state of his health compelled him to ask to be excused.

It was at this time, February 22nd, 1882, that a very old lady, whom we had often had the pleasure to meet, passed away at the age of eighty-eight—the Dowager Countess of Essex—who, years gone by, had enthralled the play-going world as 'Kitty Stephens.' Leigh Hunt said that her singing was 'like nothing else to be heard on the stage, and left all competition far behind.' Actors and actresses, like clergymen and barristers, seem to be somewhat remarkable for longevity, which, I have often thought, may be partly due to a constant exercise of the lungs.

Meanwhile we were deeply engaged upon *Odette*, working in concert with Mr. Clement Scott, to whom we had entrusted its adaptation, although he chose to remain anonymous, modestly preferring that the play should be simply announced as written by M. Sardou. It was a difficult play to manipulate, Sardou having conceived it as a strong protest against the condition of the law of divorce in France, of which an outraged husband could not then avail himself. So violent was the distinguished author on the subject, that he also

attacked it from a comical point of view in his admirable Palais Royal comedy, *Divorçons*. This state of affairs differed so materially from the experience of Sir James Hannen and Sir Charles Butt, that it was found necessary in Anglicising the work to make the husband a man who shunned such *exposés*, and chose rather to punish his wife by leaving her as such, and so preventing a marriage with her lover; with a view to perfectly adapt the part to the accent of Modjeska, we left the erring woman a foreigner. In like manner, we increased the importance of the major-domo at the gambling-hell, so admirably acted by Mr. Brookfield; while the part of Lady Walker, greatly written and suggested by Mrs. Bancroft, was of infinite value in her hands to the lighter scenes. In this play, we first had the advantage of Mr. Telbin's services, to whose brush we owed the splendid scene of the villa at Nice, with the exquisitely painted view of its harbour and the Mediterranean. Early in March, the adaptation was read to the company; its rehearsals, which were very prolonged and painstaking, then commenced, for which Madame Modjeska presently returned from Warsaw. The work was ready for production, as we had arranged, before the end of April. It was impossible to escape the radical fault of the play, to which I have before alluded—the overwhelming strength of the first act, which dwarfed the others. The long absence of the heroine from the stage which followed—until, in fact, the middle

of the third act—was another serious blemish, and required, perhaps, more than the many beauties of the closing scenes as compensation.

This drawback recalls a little incident that happened at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, on one of my visits, soon after the production of the play, and was amusing enough at the time. A Parisian couple came into the stalls directly the first act had ended, and sat immediately in front of me. By their chatter, it was soon evident that Mademoiselle Pierson, who played Odette, was the great object of their visit and the idol of the lady; the curtain having just fallen upon the favourite actress's great opening scene, and, counting two long French *entr'actes*, full an hour and a half had to elapse before she appeared again. When the second act was about a third over, the lady, who evidently knew nothing of the play, said to her companion, 'Mais, où est Pierson?' Then, at each fresh entrance of a female character, she cried, 'Ah, la voilà!' when up went her opera-glass, to be followed by a regretful 'Non, ce n'est pas Pierson.' Further and further proceeded the play, which was constantly interrupted by the plaintive question, 'Mais, donc, où est Pierson?' and the querulous reply, 'Tais-toi, ma chère.' At the end of Act II., the lady plainly began to think herself cruelly swindled, and, till the curtain rose again, little more was heard from her than 'Où est Pierson?' The third act commenced with a long scene between men; the little lady grew more and

more exasperated, when at last, to her evident relief, quite a crowd of women in evening toilettes entered on the scene. With a sigh of forgiveness she again seized her opera-glass, eagerly scanning the features of each one of them in turn, only to find the object of her adoration still was absent. No words can paint the expression of mingled disgust and anguish she then threw into her inquiry, 'Mais, mon Dieu, mon ami, où donc est Pierson?' When, at length, the charming actress, exquisitely dressed, really entered, and her long-suffering companion whispered triumphantly, 'La voilà, c'est elle; c'est Pierson!' the poor little woman answered, 'Oui, mais allons nous en, il est temps de se coucher maintenant!'

Actors often have the reputation—it may be as erroneously as in many other things, of gauging the worth of a play by the esteem in which they chance to value their individual parts; certainly the foible held good in the case of *Odette*, so far as the original representatives of the husband and wife were concerned. It may be remembered that the former is all-important early and until the middle of the play, while the little anecdote just related explains how the wife disappears for a long time, and then is paramount in the powerful closing scenes. Adolphe Dupuis, whose great talents justified Sardou's choice of him for the hero, for which he was already too old, when asked what the new play would do, replied, that 'if the end of it were only as good as its commencement and next act, he should have little

doubt of its success; but he greatly feared the catastrophe, in which he was but little concerned, would prove too weak!' while Pierson's answer to the same question was to the effect that 'after so strong a beginning she dreaded the dulness of the following act, in which she had nothing to do, and which she feared the pathetic ending could hardly save!' There are little plays, the reader will see, on both sides the curtain.

Our English version was more sumptuously placed upon the stage than any play of its *genre* had ever been before, and was now to face the verdict of the public, according to a copy of the original bill of the play:

ON TUESDAY, APRIL 25TH, 1882, WILL BE ACTED,

## ODETTE:

*A New Play, written by Victorien Sardou.*

The action of the first act is laid in Paris fifteen years ago; the rest of the play occurs at Nice in the present day.

ACT I.—'Who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.'—*Milton.*

ACT II.—'One fair daughter and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'—*Shakespeare.*

ACT III.—'Sweet is revenge
—especially to women.'—*Byron.*

ACT IV.—'She clasp'd her fervent hands,
And the tears began to stream,
Large and bitter, and fast they fell—
Remorse was so extreme.'—*Hood.*

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| LORD HENRY TREVENE - - - | MR. BANCROFT. |
| LORD ARTHUR TREVENE - - - | MR. CARNE. |
| LORD SHANDON - - - - | MR. FRANK COOPER. |
| PRINCE TROUBITZKOY - - - | MR. SMEDLEY. |

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|---|---|
| JOHN STRATFORD | MR. ARTHUR CECIL. |
| PHILIP EDEN | MR. H. B. CONWAY. |
| DR. BROADWAY WILKES | MR. OWEN DOVE. |
| MR. HANWAY | MR. PINERO. |
| CHEVALIER CARAVANI | SIGNOR MARCHETTI. |
| NARCISSE | MR. C. BROOKFIELD. |
| FRANÇOIS | MR. GERARD. |
| JOSEPH | MR. STEWART DAWSON. |
| LADY HENRY TREVENE | MADAME MODJESKA. |
| LADY WALKER | MRS. BANCROFT. |
| EVA TREVENE | MISS C. GRAHAME. |
| MARGARET EDEN | MISS MEASOR. |
| PRINCESS DE GOERTZ | MISS MARIA DALY. |
| COUNTESS KAROLA | MISS RUTH FRANCIS. |
| MRS. HANWAY | MISS FLORENCE WADE. |
| MISS BERTRAM | MISS GIFFARD. |
| OLGA | MISS WARDEN. |

Madame Modjeska received the warmest of welcomes on her return to the London stage, and rendered infinite service to the play by her superb acting. The close of the first act created the same *furore* as in Paris, the curtain being raised again and again in answer to the tumult of applause, and made us fear the like excitement could not be re-kindled. The second act (which was greatly improved by subsequent cutting) was thought too long; but the splendid interview at the end of the third between the long-parted husband and wife was loudly cheered, chiefly owing to Madame Modjeska's fine acting. The effect of the end was weakened through the lateness of the hour at which the curtain finally fell, leaving us in doubt as to the ultimate fate of the play. It proved, however, to be a success, best described, perhaps, by the word *aggravating*, as from week to week, through the comparatively

feeble demand for seats any lengthened time in advance, we were kept in doubt as to its real hold upon the public, and whether the play would last through the season, for which period we had guaranteed a costly engagement to Madame Modjeska. All, however, went well—steadily, if slowly; the stalls and best places were nightly taken and quite full, but the play never appealed greatly to the cheaper parts. The result on the production was largely profitable, in spite of the early feeling of insecurity concerning it.

It was in the spring of this year that various ideas and schemes, which had for some time been occasionally discussed between certain leading actors, took more tangible form; and the early meetings, at first informal, held at the pleasant supper-table of that most hospitable of hosts, Henry Irving (in the interesting room belonging to the Lyceum Theatre, which was formerly the meeting-place of the 'Sublime Society of Beef Steaks,' not to be confounded with the more modern but delightful Beefsteak Club), resulted in the foundation of that valuable institution, the Actors' Benevolent Fund. The principal lessees of the London theatres each promised an annual subscription of a hundred pounds, so long as their reign of management might last, and so formed a sound basis, in the shape of a commencing income of over a thousand pounds, upon which the scheme might develop.

I would like to add a few personal remarks on this

subject, it being one in which I feel the deepest interest. My own early idea was that all actors, while fulfilling engagements, should pay a tax of twopence in the pound, or at some such sort of rate as might prove sufficient, to be drawn weekly from their various salaries. The chief objection raised to this plan was, what was feared might be thought its inquisitorial nature in the way of disclosing the extent of the actors' income ; but as the treasurer of every theatre must of necessity be acquainted with the amounts of all the salaries he has to pay, he would simply have deducted the arranged percentage, and have sent the gross amount—as from the theatre he represented—to the secretary. Some experience of the fund has not shaken my belief in this system, or some modification of it. I still cannot help regarding such a principle as the best means of preventing the emphatic danger the institution, I fear, now presents, of discouraging the heavy and self-imposed labours of the committee, and also of disheartening the managers, and lessening the degree of their support. Many of them are known to feel that they contribute far too largely in proportion to the often niggardly sums subscribed by some actors who would do well to follow the example of those who are more generous, for such donations surely should be the backbone of the fund. As I ventured to say on one of the occasions when I had the honour to preside at the annual meeting of the fund :

'The great danger I dread is a fear that this association should become more a managers' fund than an actors' fund. From all I can learn of other benevolent societies, no supporters who are placed in a position of control contribute so largely in proportion as the managers do to this fund—or, indeed, with any approach to their liberality. I believe I have said more than enough to secure the good example of the managers being followed in the future. No one yet begged from an actor for charity in vain, so don't refuse me. I ask you, as it were, to give freely in the dark to bring light to others, or I hope to see the Actors' Benevolent Fund a monument to our stability and of our goodness to each other in sickness and in sorrow.

* * * * *

'I urge you to generously support the Actors' Benevolent Fund. In doing so you declare that misfortune is often undeserved, often inevitable, and you do your best to lessen its sorrows. Remember how many there are who must simply live before they can hope to save, and that to be provident is a luxury many would indulge in were they only able. I ask you to do what other professions do—what authors and painters, lawyers and doctors, have done long ago—to maintain a benevolent fund for the use of those among us who have been less fortunate than ourselves, and who in the fierce fight of life have fallen by the way. I commend to your generosity and to your sympathy—and, may I add, to your

wisdom and your sense of justice—the fund created by actors, managed by actors, supported by actors for the relief of actors, and which is destined, I hope and believe, to be the means of permanently destroying much of the misery as common to our own as to every other calling.'

The following letter is so characteristic of the writer, and so clever in itself, that the reader will welcome the space it occupies :

'108, Park Street,
Friday, *June* 9, 1882.

'MY DEAR B.,

'I send you the promised sun-picture, or photograph, with inscription. Either Monday or Tuesday—whichever is the more convenient, will find me delighted to see the play.

'Now, my dear friend, will you feel offended with an old soldier if he intrudes on your plan of battle by a remark ?

'Why are Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft taking a back-seat in their own theatre ?

'They efface themselves ! Who made the establishment ? with whom is it wholly identified ? of what materials is it built ? There—it's out !

'Your wife's work may be lightened by a selection of those bright comedy parts which she plays without exertion ; but *play* she must, and it surely gives her no more trouble to play Polly Eccles than a scene or two in *Odette*.

'Tell Marie, with my love, that there is nothing so destructive as *rest*, if persisted in; you must alter the vowel—it becomes *rust*, and it eats into life. Hers is too precious to let her fool it away; she is looking splendid, and as fresh as a pat of butter. Let us see her in a good romping girl; why don't you get up a version of the *Country Girl?* Let her play Hoyden, and you play Lord Foppington.

'I dare say you will ask me to mind my own business. Well, if you do, I shall say that the leading interests of the Drama, which you and she now represent, are my business; that the regard and affection I have personally entertained for your wife since she was a child—pray excuse me—and the friendship I have felt for you, induced me to repeat what I have heard from more than one person on both sides of the Atlantic.

'Ever yours sincerely,

'Dion Boucicault.'

Much of this kindly-meant advice was as clever as the writer of it, but we had too long 'gone our ways' to follow it, too long been contented to sometimes, in our best judgment, merely aid a good *ensemble* rather than thrust ourselves into all the leading parts, which often we could aid others to better represent.

One with whom the writer of the above letter had been closely associated in earlier days, both as author and actor, and who had lived so long as to have grown

to be, at least of its great ornaments, the *doyen* of the English stage—Benjamin Webster—passed away in July at the age of eighty-four or five. His fame as an actor would have been even greater had he never been a manager. For a long time he was lessee of both the Haymarket and Adelphi Theatres, a double care, which often prevented his being perfect in the words of many of his splendid creations; but old lovers of the drama will need no reminder of the force and pathos of his acting as Triplet, Richard Pride, Luke Fielding, in the *Willow Copse;* Robert Landry, the hero of the *Dead Heart;* Joey Ladle, in *No Thoroughfare;* and in scores of plays which followed then in quicker succession than in these days of interminable 'runs.' Webster must once have been very handsome; his eye was splendid, and his movements always graceful, possibly owing to the fact that in his early struggling days he for a time taught dancing.

Alas! how fleeting is all fame—perhaps in no case more markedly than in the actor's art—for, after all, how few really remember, or now know, much of Webster's services to the stage, and the many great productions, with their remarkable casts, which he gave to it, crowned perhaps by the original representations of some of Bulwer's plays, and the comedies of Douglas Jerrold and Dion Boucicault.

A few words received from Irving are so charmingly expressed as to alone entitle them to a fragment of this chapter.

'15*a*, Grafton Street,
Bond Street, W.,
*July* 25, 1882.

'My dear Bancroft,

'I shall wear your gift—and a rare one it is—as I wear you, the giver, in my heart.

'My regard for you is not a fading one. In this world there is not too much fair friendship, is there? And I hope it is a gratification to you—it is to me, old friend—to know that we can count alike upon a friend in sorrow and in gladness.

'Affectionately yours,
'Henry Irving.'

There is but little else to tell of the closing weeks before our summer holiday. Working ever ahead, we had for a long while been busy on the old Haymarket comedy, the *Overland Route*, and as we had decided to commence our next season with its elaborate revival, for which we had secured valuable additions to our company in Mrs. John Wood and Mr. David James, the rehearsals began—some time before we went away. They were saddened by the great regret of Arthur Cecil's secession from the company, to which for six years he had given his valued aid. Two of his finished performances will be especially remembered as perfect specimens of character-painting—Sir Woodbine Grafton, the dyspeptic Anglo-Indian in *Peril*, and Baron Stein, the Russo-Teutonic spy in *Diplomacy*. Happily this step in no way interfered with our close friend-

ship, which was to be immediately renewed in the little mountain village he loved as we did—Pontresina—and as the words of the accompanying letter will prove :

'Garrick Club,
*July* 14, 1882.

'DEAREST MRS. B.,

'I beg you and B. to accept this little present, which I offer you as a souvenir of my happy association with you for six years—a longer period than I have ever passed under any other management, and a pleasanter one by far than I can ever expect to pass elsewhere. With every good wish,

'Always yours affectionately,

'ARTHUR CECIL BLUNT.'

It was then that Mr. Pinero also gave up acting regularly, and pledging himself to long engagements, so that he might devote more time to authorship, in which career his subsequent successes have more than justified the decision we at the time personally regretted. A pleasant sentence which we quote from a good-bye letter he wrote gratified us very much. 'In one's early days, what is known as "sentiment in business" flourished poorly. In the Haymarket Theatre, the actor's willingness to do as much as he can for his managers is outmatched by his manager's anxiety to do more for the actor. I carry away with me a regard for you both, quite unbusiness-like, but which I am glad to acknowledge always and everywhere.'

Another kind expression of farewell from one we have named before, and who had sent us from his own land his delightful books describing his rambles in ours that he loved so well, reached us just as we were leaving England.

'Morley's Hotel,
*August* 2, 1882.

'My dear Bancroft,

'Your kind and gentle farewell word has been received. The only sad thing about coming to England is that one has to go away.

'I think that I leave here, at least, a *few* loving friends who won't forget me. I am sure that I take away with me memories that will always be affectionately cherished. I am truly glad to have your portrait. Remember me to Mrs. Bancroft. I am always her friend and yours.

'William Winter.'

So ended a season which had proved to be one of the most successful we had ever known.

When we reached the Engadine, we found the little English church almost completed, and during our stay it was opened with some solemnity, the Bishop of Bedford having come from England to perform the ceremony; while the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, a well-known mountaineer and lover of the glaciers, whose friendship and hospitality we had enjoyed in London, was also present. May we pause a moment to say how highly we have always

esteemed the privilege of acquaintance with one whose character must ever ennoble him in the thoughts of those who are, in the true sense, hero-worshippers? for no act of heroism could be greater than his, when, now some five-and-twenty years ago, through a dreadful railway accident, although terribly scalded, wounded, and with a broken leg, he dragged himself from underneath the *débris* of the wrecked train, refusing to allow his own condition, which seemed at the time likely to be fatal, to be relieved until he had ministered what spiritual help he could to those around him who were even nearer unto death.

His lordship, during this stay in the Engadine, remained faithful to his love for the Bel Alp and the Great Aletsch, the largest ice-field in Switzerland, for we remember his saying that 'if he might venture the opinion, the Morterasch, as a glacier, was hardly fit for a gentleman.'

The Prince and Princess Christian were again in Pontresina this year, and her Royal Highness gave a very handsome altar-cloth to the church, in fulfilment of a promise made on her previous visit. There were also other gifts, three of which brought the Church and stage in further union, for Mr. Arthur Cecil gave the books, Mr. Bancroft the bell, while Mrs. Bancroft erected a beautiful memorial window above the altar to the memory of her mother.

The church being opened, we saw no further need for entertainments in its aid, and were glad of this,

as there was very cheery company this year in the Engadine; old friends at Pontresina, and Charles Wyndham, true to his preference for St. Moritz—and who, by the way, unlike ourselves, allows his business affairs to follow him when he takes a holiday, and is consequently often a martyr to telegrams and letters. One of Charles Wyndham's oddities takes the singular form of posting letters or despatching telegrams *to himself*, as reminders of certain things he may promptly wish to do.

On one of our wanderings through the Pontresina woods, we sat upon the bench which had been erected by the kind villagers as a compliment to Mrs. Bancroft, and was inscribed with her name. On the seat we read these words, written in pencil:

'If all the world's a stage, as men repeat,
And all the men and women in it actors,
The more we owe to one who gives the seat,
And saves us all the greed of Swiss contractors.

'And yet, ungrateful still, a fault I trace,
For Bancroft's not the name my faith was built on;
How gladly would I pay for any place,
If only I might sit by Marie Wilton.'

Later in our ramble, on the hillside above the Samaden road, while watching the woodcutters at work, by way of contrast, we came across this remarkable specimen of the English language affixed to a tree, as a warning to passers-by: 'In the month of Juli and August it will cuttered the wood in the forrest Because by the transport stones also are coming down is it necessary to have care of it.'

Some of us ended our holiday at the Italian lakes; again attracted by the magnetic Como, we stayed first at Cadenabbia, where we found Mr. Labouchere in the solitary companionship of his cigarettes, peacefully recuperating from the labours of the session, and soon proving that the House of Commons had not robbed him of his fund of good stories.

We were walking in the garden one lovely evening, having arranged to dine late, when we saw (and heard), through the open windows, the crowded *table d'hôte*. In a conspicuous position we also saw, to our surprise, and I think to our amusement, the tired M.P. seated between two well-known dignitaries of the church, and evidently completing a merry trio. When the meal was over, chancing to have an hotel acquaintance with one of these prelates, we were chatting together by the shore of the lake, and asked how he had got on at dinner. 'Oh, admirably,' he replied. 'My friend and I were so fortunate in our neighbour, a delightful companion. I wonder if you happen to know who the gentleman is? He is sitting over there.'

Under the olive grove the senior member for Northampton was basking in an American rocking-chair surrounded by a halo of smoke.

'Oh,' we answered, 'don't you recognise him?' 'No; is he someone we should have known by sight? People look so different abroad.' 'That is Mr. Labouchere,' we briefly replied. 'Really, you don't say so!'

What those simple words might have meant to convey we never knew, for the speaker hurried off to impart the information to his companion.

Hard by the hotel, and close to the pretty villas built by our friends Signor Piatti and Mr. Heathcote Long, was a shop kept by an old curiosity-dealer, with whom we had rare fun one day. We had been buying some pretty pieces of silk, and, when about to leave, stopped to turn over a tray full of odds and ends, in which old shoe-buckles, stick-handles, medals, coins, supposed relics from Pompeii, trophies from battle-fields, and every conceivable kind of rubbish were mixed together in a wonderful way. In this olla-podrida we came across a mysterious-looking piece of old ironwork which, on closer inspection, amused us immensely. We saw our way to a joke with the *bric-à-brac* merchant, and retired to a distant corner with our treasure, pretending to examine it closely. A friend was passing the little shop at the moment, and we made him a party to the fun, anxiously asking his opinion on the worth of our discovery, and entering into apparent ecstasies over it, to the amazement of the old Italian, who closely watched us. We weighed it, breathed on it, polished it, whispered over it, then took it to the sunlight and inspected it through a magnifying-glass in various ways. At last we asked the shopkeeper what he would take for the apparent treasure. The wily dealer, completely taken in by our pantomime, was at once alive to its merits, and assured

us it was 'a rare specimen.' We cordially agreed, and begged him to be candid as to its being really genuine. 'Mais oui, oui, oui ; c'est vraiment—vraiment véritable : et bien remarquable !' 'Combien ?' 'Pour vous—mais seulement pour vous—vingt-cinq francs.'

We suggested the five without the twenty. The old man nearly had a fit, and asked us if we wished to rob him. We worked up the scene to a very funny pitch, and were obliged to go away to hide our laughter, saying we would think the matter over.

This wonderful discovery, this veritable antiquity, was, in truth, a broken fragment of worthless old iron, impressed with the Royal Arms and motto of England, and stamped with these words, 'Barnard, Bishop and Barnards' patent mowing machine'!

Refreshed and feeling young again, we soon started homewards, but took rather a long way round, driving first to Varese, then by Laveno to Lago Maggiore and the Borromean Islands (which, frankly, we thought rather a Roshervillean fraud, and but little worth the trouble of 'interviewing'), thence to Locarno, and, in the first year of its completion, over the stupendous Gothard railway, and through its giant tunnel to Lucerne.

At this point we were less than twenty-four hours from the Haymarket, and our approaching more intimate acquaintance with the characters of Jenny Sebright and Tom Dexter in Tom Taylor's comedy.

A 'FUNERAL NOTE,' BY M. E. B.

An odd coincidence was for years connected with our management at the Prince of Wales's Theatre which may be worth telling—its relation, at any rate, will interest the superstitious and amuse the sceptical. I allude to the appearance by the stage-door on the eve of successful productions of a black cat, or rather kitten. The mystic time for this apparition was always night, and each fresh arrival was christened after a leading character of the coming play. It really sounds incredible, but on many Fridays preceding the Saturday productions our little harbinger of good luck ran in. It grew to be recognised by everyone as the foreteller of success; and when we arrived at the theatre on the Saturday, on which day we nearly always produced our plays, or started any new venture, we were greeted by our hall-porter with the news, announced in all seriousness, 'The black cat has arrived, madam.'

For many years our sable friend presented himself at the stage-door, passed through the hall, and ran straight into the theatre. On the Friday night after the last rehearsal of the *School for Scandal* we were leaving the theatre on our way home, and I felt much disappointed that our ghostly visitor had failed us, when before we reached the end of the street, a wee black thing, no bigger than a rat, rushed past us, as if he knew he was late. I stood still to watch, and saw him run through the hall-door, and then went home delighted. The little thing was

christened Joseph Surface, and soon became a great pet with everyone; but, unlike his namesake, was a faithful friend. He was never so happy as during rehearsals, for he was on affectionate terms with all the company, and was more like a dog in sagacity. While we were abroad for this holiday he died, and was buried under the Haymarket stage by the servants who had often fondled him. Everyone in the theatre felt a sincere pang of regret at the death of 'dear Joe.' Had I asked either of my friends, Mr. Burnand or Mr. Gilbert, for an epitaph, they doubtless would have forestalled me in suggesting, 'Requiescat in pace!'

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SEASON OF 1882-83.

Oh, the penalty that has to be paid on returning from a holiday by those who, like ourselves, never allow letters to be sent after them! However, among the basketfuls of correspondence we found waiting this year was one delightful letter written from Alexandria on August 18th by Lord (then Sir Garnet) Wolseley, in which he cheerily foretold the victory of Tel-el-Kebir in these words: 'The "army" keeps arriving daily, and I hope very soon to be in a position to bring Mr. Arabi to book.'

The realization of this prophecy, and the curious incident of a strange atmospheric phenomenon caused by the comet of that year, and which immediately preceded it, prompted some verses, that were sent to the hero of the achievement and thus acknowledged:

'War Office,
*March* 6, 1883.

'My dear Mrs. Bancroft,

'I am very glad Mr. Bancroft induced you to send me your lines on Tel-el-Kebir, for I like them extremely.

'The word-painting is admirable, and the whole incident is told most feelingly and well.

'I shall put the little poem away among my treasures. Many, many thanks for it.

'Sincerely yours,

'WOLSELEY.'

Advantage was taken of the recess to refurnish and redecorate parts of the theatre, which certainly was more an extravagance than a necessity. This was throughout a bright season, from first to last, or 'find to finish,' in hunting parlance; an almost unbroken one of high success; the career of crowded houses being checked for a little while at Christmas time, the immediate cause of which, beyond the then despotic rule of King Pantomime, will be better alluded to later on.

In the *Overland Route* both the saloon and the upper deck of the s.s. *Poonah*, one of the older type, of the fine P. and O. fleet, and consequently better suited to our purpose, were, as far as possible, reproduced, after months of labour, by Mr. Hann—thanks to the opportunities Mr. Sutherland had so kindly placed at our disposal. The Eastern trip, written of in a previous chapter, now became of professional value in the reproduction of the many familiar details of life on ship-board; we were also fortunate in securing some real niggers, lascars, and ayahs, who lent great reality to the pictures. The scene of the last act, when the ship had run aground upon

a coral reef in the Red Sea, was magnificently painted by Mr. Telbin, whose acquaintance with the East and the Holy Land enabled him to boldly treat the subject. Our nightly voyage in the *Simoom* was in the fairest weather, for our revival of the old comedy began the season brilliantly, and was received with all the favour given to a successful new production. This was the detailed part of the playbill :

*On Saturday, October 7th,* 1882, *Tom Taylor's Comedy,*

## THE OVERLAND ROUTE.

The action of the first and second acts takes place on board the P. and O. steamship *Simoom;* the third act passes on a desert island in the Red Sea.

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|---|---|
| SIR SOLOMON FRASER, K.C.B. | Mr. Alfred Bishop. |
| MAJOR McTURK | Mr. Everill. |
| CAPTAIN CLAVERING | Mr. Smedley. |
| CAPTAIN SEBRIGHT, R.N. | Mr. Vernon. |
| MR. COLEPEPPER | Mr. C. Brookfield. |
| MR. LOVIBOND | Mr. David James. |
| TOM DEXTER | Mr. Bancroft. |
| CAPTAIN SMART | Mr. Carne. |
| MR. HARDISTY | Mr. Gerrard. |
| TOTTLE | Mr. Stewart Dawson. |
| MOLESKIN | Mr. Fabert. |
| LIMPET | Mr. Elliot. |
| MRS. SEBRIGHT | Mrs. Bancroft. |
| MRS. LOVIBOND | Mrs. John Wood. |
| MARY COLEPEPPER | Miss Tilbury. |
| MRS. RABBITS | Miss Maria Daly. |
| GRIMWOOD | Miss N. Phillips. |

*Passengers, stewards, crew, lascars, punkahwallahs, ayahs, etc.*

NOTES BY S. B. B.

Before I tell the reader, what I hope will prove of some interest, the first news we had of *Fedora*, let me mention a clever little monologue called *Nearly Seven*, written and acted

by Charles Brookfield, which was the *lever-de-rideau* during the run of the *Overland Route;* also that the author of that comedy being unhappily no more, we could not seek his help for certain revisions of his play, which were made, however, with great regard for his work. A very amusing and successful scene between Mrs. John Wood and herself, which became a feature of the evening, was cleverly written by Mrs. Bancroft, who also supplied an admirable addition to a dialogue between Mrs. Wood and David James, both of whom were good enough to think it of real value to their parts.

Sardou, we knew, had devoted some months to the writing of a new play, also that Sarah Bernhardt was to create a great part, but all the account he so far divulged of his story was that it dealt with the modern terror—Nihilism. Masterly as a reader and inventor of stage business for his own works, he soon after had his play in full rehearsal at the Vaudeville, when I received the following:

'La pièce de Sardou est très interessante: sa lecture a fait à tous une profonde impression, et Sarah, qui l'entendait pour la seconde fois, n'a pu s'empêcher de verser des torrents de larmes.

* * * * *

'En somme, Sarah, rôle magnifique écrit très specialement et très habilement pour elle. Pour Berton, un beau rôle dans les cords de celui qu'il a joué dans *Dora*. Tous les autres rôles sont des

compasses à l'exception d'un rôle de femme, épisodique, mais spirituelle, gai, que Madame Bancroft jouerait divinement s'il n'était pas indigne de son talent.'

*Fedora* was produced in December, and I felt the importance of witnessing the *répétition générale*, which in Paris has all the force and effect of a *première*, excepting only that the audience is restricted to the privileged, so Mr. Conway kindly qualified himself to replace me as the ship's doctor, and left me free to go to Paris. On the eve of the big rehearsal I dined with my friend Pierre Berton, when he told me the story of the play. I confess, from its bald relation, I reluctantly arrived at the sure conviction that my journey was in vain, and that the eagerly expected work, which was keeping all Paris in a fever of expectation, and formed the main topic of the Boulevardiers, would prove to be but a bloodthirsty melodrama.

On the following day, however, I found myself among the favoured occupants of the stalls, one of my immediate companions being Mr. M. L. Mayer, to whom lovers of French plays have been so indebted for years in London, and who was interested with me in the English rights, while on my other side was 'Theoc,' the pleasant Parisian contributor to the *World*. We were surrounded by literary and artistic celebrities: there, in a *baignoire*, was Alexandre Dumas, the dramatist's great rival; above, in the bal-

cony, sat Blanche Pierson and Maria Legault, looking down on the scene of their recent triumphs in *Odette*. Coquelin and Got came up the Avenue de l'Opéra from the classic home of Molière ; Alphonse Daudet and Georges Ohnet in close companionship ; the dreaded critic Francesque Sarcey ; Auguste Vitu, of the *Figaro ;* Albert Wolff, whose strange features are so ably reproduced in the Musée Grevin, the Tussaud's of Paris, are among the scores of names, owned by those of Boulevard 'light and leading,' I could recall.

After some delay, the curtain, without the warning three knocks, was raised upon an empty stage ; some person in authority then stepped forward to make an announcement, which seemed to foretell postponement ; postponement it was, but only for an hour, the cause being the non-arrival of the great Sarah's gowns. After anathemas hurled at the *modiste,* we consoled ourselves with cigarettes upon the Boulevard. Presently we returned to our places, Sardou and the managers soon afterwards came to a large space kept for them in the stalls, and the play began. In five minutes the audience was under a spell which did not once abate throughout the whole four acts. Never was treatment of a strange and dangerous subject more masterly ; never was acting more superb than Sarah showed that day to those privileged to witness it. Rachel, I think, has been described as 'the panther of the stage :' her feline mantle certainly has descended to Sarah Bernhardt ;

Sardou's delighted appreciation of the perfect rendering of his heroine being only equalled by his pleased acceptance of the congratulations which were showered upon him at the end of every act. Needless to say there was not a moment's hesitation as to buying the English rights in the play.

I remember, during this visit to Paris, going to the Gaité to see a *reprise* of the old *Courier of Lyons*, chiefly for the performance of Paulin Menier, the celebrated *Choppard*. What impressed me most was the great superiority which I thought Charles Reade's adaptation of the play, known as the *Lyons Mail*, possessed over the original. Our dramatist's *dénouement* seemed to me far the more effective. In the French play, Lesurques is about to be led to the guillotine as the curtain falls, and Dubosc's fine closing scene, as it is acted in England, has no existence.

Among other news from London at this time was the burning of the Alhambra Theatre; happily, unlike the previous terrible catastrophe at Vienna, unattended by loss of life. The calamity, however, dealt a serious blow to the theatres at the time—it proved enough of a storm to wreck the good ship *Simoom*, and so far put a check upon our *Overland Route*, that I did not think it worth while, on my return home, to resume my part. Mrs. Bancroft also resigned the coquetries of Jenny Sebright to other hands, which allowed us to spend a brief but well-remembered Christmas holiday, in companion-

ship with Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Yates, in the comfortable old Albion Hotel at Eastbourne.

Yates was in great form, and, among many of his excellent stories, Mrs. Bancroft reminds me of the following, which he told with all the verve of a clever actor, a power evidently inherited from his gifted parents, which amused us immensely. After an unfortunate night railway accident, in which, unhappily, many people were more or less injured, a search was made amongst the *débris* for the victims. While two railway guards were looking about with the aid of lighted lanterns, they suddenly came across a prostrate figure, wedged in between some of the broken timber. This poor man was *apparently* so injured that the whole of one side of his body, and especially his face, was, as it were, forced in an upward direction. The two guards, discovering this, immediately set to work to endeavour, by one pulling one way and one pulling another, to get him straight. They began their operations; the chief man directing his mate to pull up one side with a jerk, whilst he held firmly by the other. While this violent effort was going on, the poor victim cried out to them piteously (but for a long time in vain), 'No, no; *born so, born so!*' It was some seconds before the two men ascertained that this apparent result of the railway accident was in reality a physical deformity.

It was at the close of this year that Miss Kelly, the once famous actress of the *Sergeant's Wife* and

other dramas, died at the great age of ninety-three. Shortly before she passed away, I missed a pleasant opportunity of making her acquaintance in the companionship of Toole and Irving, who went to see her in her little country home. It was she who built the Royalty Theatre, which was so long a nursery for amateurs, where so many leaders of our stage made their first appearances in times gone by; and hers was the life which had twice been placed in peril by maniacs who were in love with her, and resented the popular actress's refusal of their offers by firing at her with a pistol from the pit. This old lady, bright and cheery to the close of her long life, brings to my remembrance a quaint and interesting friend of ours, a description of whom I am sure will be far more amusing from Mrs. Bancroft's pen:

'Amongst my numerous acquaintances I have met with some curious people with characteristics—possibly eccentricities—that might be passed over by many, but, as I have before said, from my childhood I have never failed to detect these peculiarities. Until her death, I had the pleasure of knowing a very eccentric and interesting old maiden lady. I say the pleasure, because I had a great regard for her. Her nature was kindly and amiable, and no one ever heard her say an ungenerous thing of man, woman, or child. She never joined in malicious gossip, and when she was unable to praise

would be silent—a noble example to womankind, I take it.

'Well, this dear lady, who was eighty-five years old, remembered many extraordinary events. Her anecdotes of days gone by were very diverting; and, although she dressed in the most Noah's Ark sort of fashion, and spoke in the most old-world way, her nature was as bright as a girl's. She loved the society of young people, mixing herself up with their lives with the keenest enjoyment. All her recollections of the past were merry; she seemed to be ever happy, and one day when asked if she would like to live to a tremendous age, she laughingly replied, "Oh, I don't much care; only I hope when I do die they'll bury me in a cheerful churchyard."

'At an evening party once there had been a great deal of classical music, which was evidently somewhat too serious for her taste, for, when asked what she thought of it, she replied in her usual cheery manner, "Oh, it is most charming! *Do* you think you could get them to play 'Tommy, make room for your uncle'? It is charmingly amusing, and I should be mightily obleeged."

'Mr. Bancroft one evening took her in to dinner, and remarked upon her wonderful health. The vivacious old lady replied that she had never known pain or ache in her life. "Not even toothache?" "Oh, never; don't know what the dreadful thing means." "Not a simple headache?" "Oh no,

never; I think it *too* ridic'lous!" "Nor ever a heartache?" The old lady at once answered archly, smiling sweetly at her companion, "*Not yet!*"

'I remember being present at an "at home" she gave. Her rooms were most quaintly furnished, and one seemed to live far, far back in the past as one gazed at her spinet, and her old-fashioned harp. Her dress comprised a pink silk skirt, trimmed with a matchless lace flounce, a low black velvet bodice, a satin scarf of the family tartan, for she was proud of her Scotch descent; open-worked stockings, and sandalled shoes. She carried a bag of some beautiful material over her arm, her "get-up" being completed by a necklace of old coral medallions and long ear-rings to match. Her hair was plaited in a small knot at the back, and three lank ringlets hung on each side of her face. She received her guests with a low curtsey, and was the cheeriest of hostesses. There was a great deal of music, but not a single sad air was played. The old lady related anecdotes in abundance, and her great anxiety was to see all the young people who were there happy and amiable.

'She had a habit of speaking her thoughts aloud, and this peculiarity sometimes caused much amusement. A young lady who had a very pretty voice was asked to sing, and at once consented. The guests gathered round. Our old friend sat near the singer, and commented audibly on the song with delightful unconsciousness, which made it hard

for anyone to preserve a grave countenance. The song commenced:

'"Kathleen Mavourneen,

('"Oh, what a charming name!")

the gray dawn is breaking,

('"Yes, I've seen it often, coming home from a ball.")

The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill,

('"Oh yes, I know, in Switzerland.")

The lark, from her light wings, the bright dew is shaking,

('"Oh, the dear little thing!")

Kathleen Mavourneen—what, slumbering still!

('"Perhaps she was up late, poor dear.")

Oh, dost thou not know that this night we must sever?
Oh, dost thou not know, love, this night we must part?

('"Oh, how can she be so cruel!")

It may be for years, or it may be for ever,

('"Oh, gracious, what a long time!")

Then wake from thy slumber, thou voice of my heart!"

('"Get up, you lazy hussy!")

'I need not say that it was with extreme difficulty the young vocalist could continue, and when the old lady shouted, "Get up, you lazy hussy!" we were all convulsed.

'Just as her last guests were preparing to go, our hostess sat down to the spinet to play, as she said, "God save the King."'

We began the new year well enough, for on its first day Mr. Pinero commenced a play which we had commissioned him to write for us; we also resumed the rehearsals for our coming farewell revival of *Caste*, which had been interrupted by the trip to Paris. This performance by us was a case of 'now or never,' as our rights in the Robertson comedies were, by arrangement with the author's son, to end in the following summer. This dear old friend—the king of its brilliant author's works—was acted on Saturday, January 20th, with the following distribution of the seven well-known characters, our two selves being now the sole members of the first cast: George D'Alroy, Mr. H. B. Conway; Captain Hawtree, Mr. Bancroft; Eccles, Mr. David James; Sam Gerridge, Mr. C. Brookfield; Marquise de Saint Maur, Mrs. Stirling; Esther Eccles, Miss Gerard; and Polly Eccles, Mrs. Bancroft—(positively for the last times).

These performances enjoyed all their old success, and we were again most fortunate with regard to the acting of those new to the play; but younger members of the cast will forgive our saying that the revival was chiefly memorable to us by the sincere pleasure we had in persuading that perfect mistress of her art, Mrs. Stirling, to play the Marquise de Saint Maur, which proved of infinite value, and whose influence at the rehearsals, owing to the unwearying pains she took throughout them, was always of good effect; also by our good for-

tune in replacing the magnificent performance of poor George Honey as Eccles by David James's equally able treatment of the part. Comparisons often enough are indeed odious; but although we thought it impossible ever to realize another Eccles, so keen is our remembrance of each intonation in every speech as originally rendered, it is but an honest tribute to Mr. James's acting to admit that in some scenes we preferred its humour. We can imagine no funnier treatment of many lines, and laugh now heartily at the remembrance of his bibulous assurance to the Marquise that he was 'always at home on Thursdays from three to six.' I fear this must be owned to be a 'gag,' for which Mr. James was very much obliged to Mrs. Bancroft, and which, I think, the author, had he lived, would have gratefully added to his book of the play.

From the time of the resolve to produce *Fedora*, we were constantly at work upon its preparation; and gave Sardou's manuscript to Mr. Herman Merivale, and asked if he would like to undertake its adaptation. Without being at all keen upon the matter, he promised to take the book down to Eastbourne, where he then lived, and see what he thought about it. The next day came a letter to say that he had put off opening the parcel until quite late at night, when, after glancing over a few pages, he grew so engrossed in its story that he found it impossible to get to bed until the last sentence of the fascinating play was devoured. Naturally we were

delighted with this opinion, and arranged for the work to be commenced at once; the adaptation was admirably and speedily finished, being a labour of pleasure. Great aid was given to Mr. Merivale, who, I am sure, would be the first to acknowledge it, in the character that had to be concocted, and written up for herself, by Mrs. Bancroft.

After careful thought we decided to entrust the splendid part of Fedora to Mrs. Bernard-Beere, and engaged Mr. Coghlan to play the hero. As for ourselves, we were satisfied to take two characters which the French describe as 'side-dishes,' and to give them all the value in our power. So for a few weeks things rested, until the long rehearsals were begun.

Meanwhile our faithful friend *Caste* pursued its way. A pleasant souvenir of the old play came to us from Linley Sambourne, who sent us the original of one of the earliest drawings he made for *Punch* when quite a youngster. It is a sketch of Papa Eccles, who had evidently just 'met a friend round the corner,' supported by Captain Hawtree and Sam Gerridge. In the artist's own words: 'It was done early in the year 1867, when I was just beginning to draw, and twenty-two years of age. I went to the pit to delight in *Caste*, and drew the sketch from memory. The late Mark Lemon selected it from others for me to put on wood for *Punch*, and it appeared in the number for July 20th, 1867.

It chanced that our friend and comrade, Mr. Hare,

was not acting in his own theatre at this time, and the idea occurred to us that it would be delightful to all three if, on the last night of *Caste*, under our management, he would appear in his original character of the gasman. His answer to a letter suggesting this happy thought will best speak his feelings on the subject:

'The Red House,
Hornton Street, Campden Hill,
*March* 6, 1883.

'My dear Mrs. Bancroft,

'Believe me, I reciprocate all the kind feelings expressed in your letter. It will be to me a source of the greatest pleasure to be once more "Sam" to your "Polly" on the occasion of your last appearance in *Caste*, associated as that play is, in my mind, with such a host of pleasant and kindly memories. Those old times were indeed happy ones, and the recollection of them is not easily to be effaced.

'Believe me,
'Dear Mrs. Bancroft,
'Always yours,
'John Hare.'

The evening of Friday, April 13th, 1883, will long be remembered by us, and is not likely to fade easily from the memory of anyone present. There had been a very extraordinary demand for all the reserved seats; many persons of eminence and distinction anxious to be present applied, to our great regret, too late, while the crowd at the doors leading to the

cheaper parts of the theatre thronged the Haymarket from an early hour in the day. It was apparent, directly the curtain rose, that the audience was exceptional, and that some strange magnetic influence affected both auditor and actor; the reception of all the familiar characters was very prolonged, while of Mr. Hare, the moment he appeared as Sam Gerridge, and of ourselves—no other word will so express the demonstration as—affectionate. It would look like exaggeration to describe the enthusiasm which followed the comedy, or the scene that occurred at the close of it. 'Polly Eccles' had been throughout the evening the recipient of magnificent presents of flowers, one gigantic bouquet bearing her name in roses. At the end of the play these beautiful offerings were all banked up in every direction on the humble furniture of the 'Little House in Stangate,' when, time after time, she bowed her adieux to the excited audience, standing in turn with her old comrade, whose presence had so graced the occasion, with Mrs. Stirling, and finally again and again with her hand in Captain Hawtree's.'

Mrs. Bancroft has a story to tell here:

'This wonderful floral tribute, which was followed by the gift of a bracelet composed of large brilliants and inscribed, "From Captain Hawtree to Polly Eccles," was strong in contrast to my first experience of souvenirs in a theatre, which takes me back again to childhood's days.

'I have a vivid recollection of acting in a temporary theatre built on the beach of a small fishing town somewhere in the North, and will relate an incident which abruptly terminated one of my performances. The floor of our dressing-room was simply the sandy shore, and there was a wooden plank close to the table, upon which I stood, preparing for a Highland-fling to be danced by me. Suddenly an unusually high tide took place, and the water made rapid progress into this room, so I hurried upstairs, but not before my thin shoes had been well filled with sea-water. The reader, who may know the dance-step of a fling, will be able to imagine the effect my wet shoes had upon the stage. I must have caused a great sensation amongst the fishwives, who, unable to control their ecstasies, threw herrings on to the stage to me with such exclamations as 'The bonnie wee bairnie!' 'She's just like ma Maggie!' 'Oh, the dearie!' 'Fling her a herrin'!' I intended to take no notice of this eccentric form of bouquet (so horrified was I), but someone called out from the wings, 'Pick them up and acknowledge them, or there will be a riot.' So, frightened out of my life I forced an alarmed smile upon my face, gathered up the herrings, which slipped from my hands as soon as I took hold of them, and got off the stage as quickly as possible, my small arms being laden with these fishy offerings. The dance was loudly encored; but before I had got half through its repetition an alarm was raised. 'The sea is on us! The sea is

on us! Save the wee lassie!' The lights suddenly went out, and the scrimmage was awful. I was seized and thrust into a large fish-basket (I smelt it!) and carried off on some man's back, who, I believe, jumped on the stage to rescue me. I can smell those herrings still, and have never cared for fish since that experience!

Then came a cordial but brief adieu to Jack Poyntz and dear 'Nummy' Tighe in *School*. These performances we were compelled to limit to three weeks, our version of Sardou's play being almost ripe for production, and could not wisely be further delayed, as the season was already advancing. Had we chosen, we might easily have continued the old Robertsonian favourites until its close; but we dreaded the renewal of such monotony, for whenever we had of late years resumed the long familiar parts, the intervals seemed to disappear, and we almost felt as though we had never acted any others. After playing Polly Eccles and Naomi Tighe for the last times, Mrs. Bancroft received numerous requests for various things she had worn in those characters, and some time was spent in selecting shoes, gloves, or flowers, and sending them to their new owners. I remember her looking for a long time at Polly's holland apron (marked 'Polly Eccles' on the band), and bidding it an affectionate 'good-bye.'

The letter from her 'adored Jack Poyntz,' which

Naomi Tighe read so many times in the last act, was given, at his request, to Mr. Hastings. A few things were retained, which in years to come will be looked upon by us as relics of bright and happy days gone by.

During this farewell to *School*, and while my heavy work with the rehearsals of *Fedora* was at its height, we lost the services of our secretary and business manager, Mr. Charles Walter, who had enjoyed our confidence in that capacity for seven years. Always a man of delicate health, his cheery nature fought so hard, and he had recovered so frequently from many attacks, that his death, after a brief illness, was a great shock, and cast a gloom over the theatre, where he was very popular. This calamity gave me much extra work at a time of great anxiety, and I decided for the future to divide the duties combined by Mr. Walter, and engaged Mr. Edward Russell, who had long held a responsible position with Mr. Irving, as treasurer, giving the office of secretary to Mr. G. F. Bashford, who was well qualified for the post. He formerly held a commission in the Scots Greys, and after he left the service had married Mrs. Bancroft's sister Augusta.

Loud were the ominous prognostications with regard to the fate of *Fedora* in England. Grave head-shakings emphasised the opinions so freely urged that the subject would be found repugnant. Outspoken were the thoughts that the task was

hopeless without Sarah Bernhardt. One little incident, perhaps, will best illustrate these forebodings.

A dear friend of ours, whom we will call Mr. 'X.' (as he would doubtless prefer to remain 'an unknown quantity'), called one day, less than a week before the announced date of this 'rash' production, when there was some talk between us to this effect:

Mr. X.: 'Frankly, my dear B., what do you think your new play will really do?'

Mr. B.: 'Frankly, it will be an emphatic success; and, as it did in Paris, will draw the town.'

Mr. X.: 'I'm delighted, if you truly think so.'

Mr. B.: 'Between ourselves, I have no doubt about it, or a moment's dread of any other result. You know the extent of my original belief in it—to say nothing of the big figures dealing with a Sardou play means; now that the dull and depressing period of the long rehearsals—when one wonders if the work in hand was ever worth the labour—has passed, its value is manifest.'

Mr. X.: 'And Mrs. Bernard-Beere?'

Mr. B.: 'Will astonish all of you. Of course she is not the divine Sarah, and we almost regret that she went to Paris to see her.'

Mr. X.: 'Why?'

Mr. B.: 'Sarah Bernhardt is now, I take it, the great tragic actress of the world. I never saw Rachel, but I can't imagine her being greater than Sarah at her best. Now for Mrs. Bernard-Beere to

really imitate her is impossible. A contralto must never try to sing soprano songs. This, when Mrs. Bernard-Beere began her rehearsals, she, to some extent, wished to do; but, with patience and friendly guidance, her quick intelligence soon appreciated the difference between a slavish imitation of an individual, and adapting to another model much of the masterly stage-business which was, in truth, the invention of the author.'

Mr. X.: 'I think I follow your argument, my dear B.'

Mr. B.: 'Certainly we never met anyone who would more readily listen to suggestions, or work harder to embody them with life and meaning.'

Mr. X.: 'Is the play much altered from the French?'

Mr. B.: 'Very little; Merivale's work is admirable. I have ventured in the stage-management to slightly modify a few painful details in the first act, and to trust for their full effect to the imagination of the audience.* Remember the end of the second act of *Ours;* once *show* the troops passing the window and, in my poor judgment, the play is destroyed. I think you will acknowledge the scene I allude to is the most powerful instance of stage-craft and construction you can remember. The smaller

* As a proof of the power of imagination—if properly worked on—a very old stager said to me, after seeing this scene, 'My dear B., when the surgeon went into the bedroom, and the doors were shut, I give you my word I could hear the dying man's moans through the walls.'

parts require very careful "coaching;" the least movement of everyone concerned has its meaning.'

Mr. X.: 'Then what on earth do the adverse rumours afloat mean?'

Mr. B.: 'I can't imagine; I can only ask you not to contradict them.'

Mr. X.: '*Not* to contradict them!'

Mr. B.: 'By no means.'

Mr. X.: 'Why, there are people, and this is really the reason of my coming to you at this busy time, going about, not ill-naturedly, but convinced from report that their chatter is true, saying that *Fedora* will be the direst failure on record; and one of them goes so far as to add that he knows for a fact another play is being rehearsed *sub rosa* in the afternoons, all concerned in it being under the strictest pledge of secrecy, so as to quickly stem the tide of disaster that is sure to flow.'

Mr. B. (laughing heartily): 'Let him chatter; don't curb his tongue. He means us no harm, and certainly is doing us good.'

Mr. X.: 'Good! Tell me why you think so.'

Mr. B.: 'In things theatrical there is nothing more valuable than a revulsion of feeling. If our audience, next Saturday, is prepared but for failure, it will only add warmth to their reception of a success.'

Mr. X.: 'And that you feel you are on the heels of?'

Mr. B. : ' Yes, and with nothing, that I can foresee, likely to trip us up.'

Mr. X. : ' Good-bye, my dear B. ; though, for all you say, I shall go to my stall with anxiety.'

Mr. B. : ' It will be all right. I only wish it was over, for I feel rather worn out, the work having been unusually heavy.'

That these sanguine expectations were verified is matter of stage history. The success of the play was phenomenal, and never for a moment in doubt. News of its magnificent reception was telegraphed to Sardou, who was staying at Marly, all efforts having failed to induce him to cross the Channel to pay his first visit to London and assist at a *première*.

We now give a copy of the playbill, and acknowledge how much we owed to the good-nature and courtesy of M. Demidoff, of the Russian Embassy, for a careful lesson in the proper sound of the national names and sentences used in the play.

ON SATURDAY, MAY 5TH, 1883, WILL BE ACTED

FEDORA:

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS, WRITTEN BY VICTORIEN SARDOU.

*The English Version by Herman Merivale.*

The first act passes at St. Petersburg ; the rest of the play in Paris.

| | |
|---|---|
| LORIS IPANOFF - - - - | MR. CHARLES COGHLAN. |
| JEAN DE SIRIEX - - - - | MR. BANCROFT. |
| PIERRE BOROFF - - - - | MR. CARNE. |
| M. ROUVEL - - - - - | MR. SMEDLEY. |
| M. VERNET - - - - - | MR. H. FITZPATRICK. |

| | |
|---|---|
| DR. LORECK | MR. ELLIOT. |
| GRETCH | MR. C. BROOKFIELD. |
| BOLESLAS LASINSKI | MR. FRANCIS. |
| TCHILEFF | MR. F. EVERILL. |
| DÉSIRÉ | MR. GERRARD. |
| DMITRI | MISS JULIA GWYNNE. |
| KIRILL | MR. STEWART DAWSON. |
| IVAN | MR. VERNON. |
| PRINCESS FEDORA ROMAZOFF | MRS. BERNARD-BEERE. |
| COUNTESS OLGA SOUKAREFF | MRS. BANCROFT. |
| BARONESS OCKAR | MISS HERBERT. |
| MADAME DE TOURNIS | MISS MERRILL. |
| MARKA | MISS R. TAYLOR. |

The play's wonderful success allows us a pause to speak of other things, although, for a moment, its bright career was imperilled by an accident to Mrs. Bernard-Beere, who acted, however, in spite of severe lameness, with great courage and endurance.

As our changes of residence have hitherto been noted, it may be mentioned, especially as a manager's private address becomes somewhat public by the Lord Chamberlain's license requiring it to be printed on every playbill, that, having felt the want of sun very much in the house we had occupied for eight years in Cavendish Square, and in which Romney painted many of his finest portraits, owing to its northern aspect, we had often sought to change it. A few months previously we came across a pleasant house, not too large, in Berkeley Square, which gave us again our beloved trees, among the finest in London, and supplied the lack of sun; so we bought the lease, and in the summer of this year first lived there. Later on, our interest in this new

home was not lessened by Lady Molesworth, whose friendship we shall be always proud of having enjoyed, telling us that she was married from the same house, nor by learning that within a few doors Mrs. Bancroft's maternal great-grandfather had once resided.

On the 4th of July, one of the greatest compliments I can remember ever being offered to an actor was paid to Henry Irving, and through him to the entire theatrical world, in the banquet which was given in his honour at St. James's Hall, prior to his first visit to America, under the presidency of the Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Coleridge—an event only to be paralleled by reference to the great festival when John Kemble left the stage. To name those who filled the great hall on the occasion would be to print a list of England's celebrities; not only in literature and art, for leaders in almost every phase of intellect and eminence were present, in which sense it eclipsed the Charles Kean banquet. There are more appropriate places to chronicle the event in detail than the pages of this book, which, however, would be incomplete without this brief allusion to it.

I performed rather a feat, which was entirely unpremeditated, on the memorable evening. *Fedora* was acted at an hour that allowed me to sit down to the soup, although I had to disappear with the fish. In the second and third acts of the play, I wore evening dress. Some eight minutes before the

end of the second act, and during the interval, I was free, and on the spur of the moment returned at full speed to St. James's Hall, just as I was—made up as the French diplomate, my head suggesting a kind of younger Duc d'Aumale. I was fortunate enough to enter the room at the happy moment when Lord Coleridge was proposing the chief toast, and able to remain long enough to hear the greater part of Irving's reply. Of course I knew my time almost to a second, and was back on the Haymarket stage, somewhat out of breath, for I made both journeys on foot, without causing any delay. When I had finished my part, I went again to the hall, and was lucky enough to hear Mr. Lowell, one of the best and most amusing orators I ever listened to, conclude an eloquent speech.

In the following week another banquet of some interest took place, which may be more fully dwelt on in this book, as it emanated from myself. The idea occurred to me to give a farewell supper to Irving before his departure, and to let it have the distinctive character of inviting none but actors to it. Feeling that nowhere could it be given so appropriately, I ventured to ask the sub-committee of the Garrick Club if, under the special circumstances, it might be allowed to take place in the chief dining-room at midnight. Greatly to my delight, the kindness of acquiescence was accorded to me, Sir Algernon Borthwick being good enough to write my request was 'an honour to the

club.' The room, so wonderfully appropriate for the purpose, was arranged to accommodate ninety guests, whose names it may be interesting to preserve:

Mr. James Anderson,
Mr. G. W. Anson,
Mr. F. Archer,
Mr. George Alexander,
Mr. H. Ashley,
M. Pierre Berton,
Mr. Lawrence Barrett,
Mr. Wilson Barrett,
Mr. George Barrett,
Mr. J. H. Barnes,
Mr. Lionel Brough,
Mr. Dion G. Boucicault,
Mr. Kyrle Bellew,
Mr. Alfred Bishop,
Mr. C. Brookfield,
Mr. J. Billington,
Mr. Edgar Bruce,
Mr. G. F. Bashford,
Mr. W. Creswick,
Mr. J. Carne,
Mr. John Clayton,
Mr. Arthur Cecil,
Mr. H. B. Conway,
Mr. Charles Coghlan,
Mr. J. S. Clarke,
Mr. George Conquest,
Mr. Arthur Dacre,
Mr. Stewart Dawson,
Mr. F. Everill,
Mr. W. G. Elliot,
Mr. J. Fernandez,
Mr. David Fisher,
Mr. H. Fitzpatrick,
Mr. Corney Grain,
Mr. George Grossmith,
Mr. E. Girardot,
Mr. Hare,
Mr. Augustus Harris,
Mr. Howe,
Mr. E. Hastings,
Mr. Irving,
Mr. David James,
Mr. H. Jackson,
Mr. W. H. Kendal,
Mr. Walter Lacy,
Mr. F. Leslie,
Mr. H. J. Loveday,
M. Marius,
Mr. J. Maclean,
Mr. W. Mackintosh,
Mr. T. Mead,
Mr. Henry Neville,
Mr. Alfred Nelson,
Mr. A. W. Pinero,
Mr. R. Pateman,
Mr. Howard Paul,
Mr. H. Paulton,
Mr. John Ryder,
Mr. E. Righton,
Mr. Alfred Reed,
Mr. Forbes Robertson,
Mr. J. T. Raymond,
Mr. E. Russell,
Mr. E. Smedley,
Mr. R. Soutar,
Mr. Arthur Stirling,
Mr. C. Sugden,
Mr. Herbert Standing,
Mr. T. Swinbourne,
Mr. Bram Stoker,
Mr. W. Terriss,
Mr. H. Beerbohm Tree,
Mr. T. Thorne,
Mr. Edward Terry,
Mr. J. G. Taylor,
Mr. J. L. Toole,
Mr. W. H. Vernon,
Mr. Percy Vernon,
Mr. Hermann Vezin,
Mr. R. H. Wyndham,
Mr. Charles Warner,
Mr. E. S. Willard,
Mr. E. N. Wenman,
Mr. E. D. Ward.

Engagements in America and the provinces robbed me of a few friends, whose names may possibly be missed from the list, and whose presence would have delighted me.

Excepting only Mr. Bashford and Mr. Russell, our

secretary and treasurer, and Mr. Bram Stoker and Mr. Loveday, so long and closely associated with Mr. Irving, all present were actors. The gathering was commented upon as a 'supper of honour,' and it may be interesting to preserve here the speech in which I proposed the health of my chief guest :

'Your greeting makes me very nervous ; in fact, the remembrance of the audience I had to face to-night made me very nervous during the day, when, suddenly, I took comfort from the thought that if I should break down in my attempt to address you, I had provided the best possible "under-study" in my young friend Mr. Ward, who not only could pick me up, but "take me off" so well, I am told, and on the best possible authority, that you would be unable to detect the difference ;* however, I hope I shall not have to call upon his good-natured imitation, for of whatever quality the stuff may be, no doubt you would prefer the original article. My position at the present moment is a proud one. I am proud of the generous compliment paid me by the committee of this club in allowing me the great privilege of entertaining you in this room, and I am indeed gratified to find myself surrounded by so many who rank from very dear friends to most valued acquaintances ; while from the walls around us we are looked down upon by the effigies of those whose names

* An allusion to Mr. E. D. Ward's amusing imitation of me in a burlesque on *Fedora*, then being played at Toole's Theatre.

mean all that is famous in the past of our great theatrical history ; for I am bold enough to contend that from the days of the giant after whose immortal name this club is called, to those of my most distinguished guest, no country in the world can boast a prouder dramatic history than our own, and that no actors in the world have done more—taken from all time and for all in all—to uphold and adorn the beautiful art we follow than the actors of England. My words may sound egotistical, addressed as they are by an actor to actors, but such is not my wish ; and surely there must be proof of the truth of what I have ventured to say in the esteem in which gradually, and by hard and good work, our profession has been brought to be regarded. In the foremost ranks of those who have so worked must be placed the name of Henry Irving. When the idea first came to me to ask you to give me the honour of your company to wish Mr. Irving God-speed before he sails for America, it was with the thought that it would not perhaps be the least valued of the compliments that have been showered upon him to know that his comrades are among his best well-wishers. I would ask you to remember that, however high the position we may attain, or however humbly we may remain in the ranks, the reflection of the great honour shown to Henry Irving last Wednesday by that wonderful representative gathering of the intellect of this land is shed upon our art and upon us, and that a share of its brightness belongs to the

humblest amongst us. Although I will yield to none of you in my affection for him, I confess that it requires a sweeter voice, a more fluent tongue, than fall to my lot, to sing the praises of our friend ; but, fortunately for me, neither he nor his deeds are strangers to you, and a brief reminder will fill your hearts with all the good wishes I ask for him ; and I cannot but think it would sound fulsome, in such an assembly as this, were I to dwell at too great a length on his many claims to our regard and admiration. No one knows him as you do, none are fonder of him than we are, and none are prouder of his great success than we—his fellow-workers.'

In the course of the generous speech in which my old friend Hare, who sat on my left hand, proposed my health, he spoke words which touched me very much, and my vanity must bear the blame of their appearance here :

'It seems to me to have been a peculiarly fit and gracious thing that we should have been invited by the oldest and most successful manager in London to drink "bon voyage" and "God-speed" to its most distinguished and successful actor. To praise a man before his face is a somewhat delicate task ; but fortunately we all know Mr. Bancroft so well, and esteem him so highly, that he may well be spared any eulogies from me. His great ability as a manager is known to all, and it should never be forgotten that he was the first to originate and to introduce those

reforms to which the dramatic profession owes so much of its present proud position ; although other managers have followed, and successfully followed, his lead, it should always be remembered that the lead was his. Those who have been fortunate enough to serve under his management—and there must be many such at this table—can testify to his unvarying kindness, his generosity, and his just dealings with all, and many of his most generous actions have been known only to the recipients of them. Perhaps not the least pleasing of Mr. Bancroft's reflections in the evening of his life, when we trust he may long enjoy the rest he deserves, and has worked for so well, will be that his long career as a manager has been one of probity and honour, that he has intentionally wronged no man, but that many owe much to him, and hold him in affectionate remembrance. As one of his oldest friends and fellow-workers, as one who passed ten happy years under his management, as his largest debtor for innumerable acts of kindness, I ask you to join me in heartily drinking "The health of Mr. Bancroft."'

Some able remarks in his own language were delightfully spoken by Pierre Berton, who represented the French stage, and a brilliant impromptu speech was delivered by Mr. Lawrence Barrett, the distinguished American actor (who arrived in England, to my great pleasure, just in time to be present). This was unhappily lost, except upon the fortunate

hearers, as the speaker did not make a single note, and all his efforts on the following day to recall his words were unavailing.

I will close my reference to this supper-party by anticipating events a little, and will relate a pleasant incident that happened late on a night in the following spring. My wife was on the staircase, on her way to her room, when we were startled by a loud knocking at the front door. The servants had locked up the house and, I thought, had gone to bed; but one of them had not, it seemed, for I heard the door-chain loosened, and in a moment more a well-known voice asked if I was at home or not. As I ran downstairs I called out to Mrs. Bancroft, 'Come down again; I am sure it's Irving.' He almost embraced me in the hall, and said, in the next breath, 'How white you've grown, old fellow!' He had only that evening returned from America, and took his chance of finding us at home. What a long delightful talk we had! and the clock struck often while we listened to his tale of travels and experiences.

Some requirements of the Metropolitan Board of Works, resulting doubtless from the burning of the Ring Theatre, in Vienna, and the more recent Alhambra catastrophe, having regard to the London theatres, with a view to better ensure the safety of the public in the event of fire, had to be complied with before a fixed date, which necessitated our breaking the run of *Fedora*. This was a misfortune,

as the play had so firm a hold on public favour that fair weather or foul, heat or cold—and the thermometer often rules theatres with an iron will—made no difference in its attraction, and would otherwise have induced us to keep the theatre open through the summer, but, under the circumstances, we decided to leave town for a holiday at our usual time, giving up our parts, until the enforced date of closing in August, to Mr. Conway and Miss Calhoun, a clever young Californian actress, who had for some little time been a member of our company without having had the opportunity of an appearance. Mr. Coghlan, tempted by a large offer to revisit America, begged to be released from his engagement at the date of closing, and we agreed to his wish.

This year we respected the objection to *toujours perdrix*, and resolved to try new ground for our holiday. Reluctantly we forsook the Engadine, at any rate for a season. This was a good resolve, for even the miser who daily gloats over his hoard may chink his gold too often ; then its sound grows so familiar that he loses some of the sweetness of its music.

We chose Homburg for the first part of our stay abroad, and were cheerfully lodged in the Untere Promenade. We only toyed with the Elizabeth Brunnen, and relied for renovation more upon the good air and bright society, of which there was no lack. Sometimes in the early morning the crowd of health-seekers was very largely Park and Piccadilly in its character, for the list of water-drinkers would

have done credit to any fashionable gathering honoured by Royalty downwards, and chronicled in the *Morning Post*.

We met and made no end of friends, and passed a pleasant 'cure.' My share of it was somewhat interfered with by a rash resolve to take up the part of Loris Ipanoff when we resumed the run of *Fedora*, as I had found some difficulty in otherwise replacing Coghlan.

During our stay the Prince of Wales, always among the most punctual at the favoured spring, took many opportunities to be gracious, and the late Duke and the Duchess of Albany honoured us one evening with an invitation to their villa, when Mrs. Bancroft added her signature to his Royal Highness's remarkable book of autographs, in which I had already had the honour to write my name on an occasion when I passed a day at Claremont, at the invitation of the Prince, from whom a few days afterwards I received this letter :

'Osborne,
*April* 12, 1881.

'DEAR MR. BANCROFT,

'Pray accept my best thanks for the photograph of Mrs. Bancroft, which I think excellent, also for your own as "Triplet." I shall value them very much. With kind regards to Mrs. Bancroft,

'Believe me,

'Yours very truly,

'LEOPOLD.'

There is no need to dwell upon the familiar routine of a German watering-place. The waters may be laden with iron or charged with salt; the baths may be of pine, or perhaps of mud; still the life is much the same: there is generally a strong family resemblance between the Schloss, the Kursaal, the band, and the constant evidence of the Kaiser's vast army. Whichever the Bad you choose, or is chosen for you, the stall-keepers seem ubiquitous, and to pursue their victims with their corals, their tortoise-shells, and their filigrees, no matter where they wander.

It was during this summer trip that we read with great regret of the sudden death of Mr. Dutton Cook, whom we regarded as one of the ablest, as he was certainly one of the most difficult to please, of all our dramatic critics. Personally, I have often worked my hardest to wring one line of praise from his cold but honest pen, and never felt more rewarded than when I earned it.

Feeling that our holiday would be incomplete without a peep at the mountains, we fixed on Zermatt for a short visit. Our journey there, after we left the Lake of Thun, was through a part of the country new to us, by Kandersteg, and over the Gemmi Pass, to the Baths of Leuk, where from a gallery you can see the patients bathing, many of whom pass the hours they are condemned to spend immersed in the mud playing chess, or drinking coffee; thence down to the pestilential valley of the

Rhone, where at almost every turn one meets the two Swiss horrors, the *goître* and the *cretin*.

Too tired to push on to the little inn at Stalden, we had to sleep in the depressing, though picturesque, village of Visp, starting gladly with early morning for our destination, and, on a perfect day, first saw the noble Matterhorn, which certainly, of all the giant Alpine peaks, should be called the monarch. As seen from the Hörnli and the Riffel, he is grander still, and remains graven upon the memory in all his dignity ; seeming, as it were, to frown in triumph upon the graves in the little churchyard far below, where lie the bones of those who were of the party that first conquered him, but met death in their descent, as if in retribution for their presumption.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SEASON OF 1883-84.

THE alterations in the theatre were entirely confined to that part of it behind the curtain, and when we reached town, we found the stage still in the hands of the contractor, but the work, although completed by the fixed date, allowed me a few days only to rehearse my new part of Loris Ipanoff, to which I had been obliged to devote a large share of my time when abroad. This great disadvantage—lack of time—did not fully manifest itself until the opening night (September 29th), when I felt myself to be insufficiently rehearsed, and to a considerable extent unprepared to do justice to my intentions. My performance, so far as my own judgment upon it may be accepted, improved greatly in a few days; and not being, I hope, given to over-value my own work, I regard the third act, in which Loris relates at great length the story of his wrongs, among the best of my efforts as an actor. The character, however, in the fourth act, to receive full justice, requires certain

qualities of voice greater in power than are at my command. With the serious drawbacks also of having broken the run, and the loss of Mrs. Bancroft's services (which always militated like magic against the attractive powers of any play), we felt that *Fedora* could not be expected to regain its former fierce hold upon the public.

NOTE BY M. E. B.

There was some surmise, I remember, as to whether Mr. Bancroft would discard his eye-glass, he being very helpless without it. In his assumption of Loris Ipanoff, as in Triplet and several other characters, he, of course, did so, except at rehearsal, when it had to be used with double care in order to master the business of the scene; and I remember very old-fashioned glasses of the period being bought for Joseph Surface and other last century parts which, although carried out of sight, could have been used in the event of any emergency. This circumstance reminds me to tell briefly how, at one of Lady Hayter's delightful parties, we were treated to a hearty laugh at my husband's expense. On our arrival at the supper-table, Miss Melita Ponsonby (if she will forgive me for mentioning her name) laughingly remarked how completely *hors de combat* she felt, having lost her eye-glass on her way from one party to another that evening. She was quite unable to recognise her friends in the room, or to distinguish one thing from another on the table. Miss Ponsonby was so plainly

at a loss to know what to do, that Mr. Bancroft offered to assist her to some refreshment, and she thanked him. My husband immediately adjusted his eye-glass, and began to look about for something. Miss Ponsonby laughingly remarked, 'Ah, your glass would be no use to me; I am more blind than you, Mr. Bancroft!' Upon which he replied, 'Then you must be blind indeed, Miss Ponsonby.' She then asked permission to try his glass, and found, to her great delight, that it suited her sight exactly; for she was able to look about the room, to distinguish her friends, and to walk round the table to choose for herself. Mr. Bancroft's eye-glass is always firmly fastened to his collar-stud, and cannot be removed without some difficulty. His ludicrous attitude, consequently, may well be imagined when I say that wherever Miss Ponsonby went, Mr. Bancroft was of necessity compelled to follow, for she, unexpectedly finding a glass through which she could see so clearly, was naturally not inclined to let the prize go in a hurry. So away Miss Ponsonby went, followed everywhere by Mr. Bancroft, attached by a short string which he vainly attempted to detach. It had the funniest effect possible, for whenever Miss Ponsonby stopped suddenly to see what she would like to select, down went my husband's face too, and his serious expression of countenance made us laugh all the more. This eye-glass of Mr. Bancroft's has often been the cause of good fun to me, and a blessing to the caricaturists.

We had the pleasure this autumn to renew our friendly relations with Mrs. Langtry, who had passed a long time in the United States, and was returning there with the intention to act *Peril*, there called *A Wife's Peril*, as its own title was claimed by an American author. The following letter will explain a small share we had in the matter:

'120, West Thirteenth Street,
New York,
*October* 28, 1883.

'My DEAR MR. BANCROFT,

'Many, *many* thanks for your kindness in letting me have your prompt-book of *Peril;* I appreciate the gift, and thank you heartily for your generosity. I was dreadfully worried all the way across, not knowing how I should manage without it, for I know how much the success of *Peril* was due to the perfect stage-management.

'I have been overworking myself, rehearsing from ten till ten every day, and am feeling the effects. I wish I could take things a little more easily, but the love of acting grows upon me, and I think of absolutely nothing else.

'I shall never forget your and "Mrs. B.'s" kindness in giving me my first engagement, for I feel that my subsequent success was owing in a very great degree to the position you gave me. I am writing what I feel.

* * * * *

'I must tell you again how grateful I am to you

for the prompt-book, and if the piece succeeds, I shall attribute it to you.

'Yours very truly,

'LILLIE LANGTRY.'

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

*Fedora* only served the purpose of drawing fairly good houses until we prepared Mr. Pinero's comedy, to which he had given the attractive title, *Lords and Commons*. How this play came about may be worth the telling. One day, on my way from Paris by the tidal train, on board the boat I met Henry Russell, the still hale and hearty composer of 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer,' 'The Ivy Green,' 'The Land of the West,' and scores of other well-known songs. Mr. Russell, who has lived for years at Boulogne, where he is as well known as the *préfet* himself, told me he had just finished reading a novel which had pleased him very much, and in which he thought were the germs of a good play. Very kindly he afterwards sent us the book, which we found to be a rather crude translation of a clever Swedish romance. We told the plot to Mr. Pinero, who thought he saw in it the starting-point for his work, and although his play owed a little in incident to its story, it was only in outline and suggestion.

The author read and rehearsed his play with great skill, giving all concerned a clear insight into the value of his characters: an art rarely possessed in the highest degree, in my experience,

but by author-actors, as, for instance, Dion Boucicault and T. W. Robertson (who was for some time an actor, although never a prominent one). This faculty is shared, doubtless owing to a long-since-acquired intimate acquaintance with the stage, by W. S. Gilbert. H. J. Byron, strange to say, was devoid of the power; on the other hand, so far as our experience goes, it is distinctly owned by F. C. Burnand, who acted a good deal *en amateur*. Was he not, indeed, the founder of the A. D. C. at Cambridge?

*Lords and Commons* allowed us the great pleasure of again numbering Mrs. Stirling among the members of our company, to which Mr. Forbes-Robertson also returned, to remain prominently connected with us until the close of our management.

The author diligently directed the rehearsals, and no pains were spared by all concerned to bring his work successfully through its ordeal. As for *décor*, perhaps stage illusion went as far as need be in the old hall and the terrace, which were perfect specimens of Mr. Telbin's art, while the tapestry-room was made very complete by Mr. Walter Johnstone. Caryl Court, both in its decay and renovation, was a splendid specimen of an old English mansion.

The construction of the play was full of talent and ingenuity, the types of characters most original (although in some cases drawn, perhaps, with too strong a leaning towards the meaner side of our poor humanity), and much of the dialogue showed the

highest excellence; but, unfortunately, the sympathy of the audience early in the story was forfeited by the aristocrats, and, once lost, it was difficult to restore it to them, in spite of the pathetic beauty of the closing scene, which was treated with exceptional skill by Forbes-Robertson.

*On Saturday, November 24th, 1883, will be played, for the first time,*

## LORDS AND COMMONS:

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY, IN FOUR ACTS, WRITTEN BY A. W. PINERO.

The scene is laid at Caryl Court, near Ottway, St. Anne, in the spring and summer of the present time.

| | |
|---|---|
| EARL OF CARYL | MR. FORBES-ROBERTSON. |
| LORD PERCY LEWISCOURT | MR. C. BROOKFIELD. |
| SIR GEORGE PARNACOTT, M.D. | MR. ELLIOT. |
| TOM JERVOISE | MR. BANCROFT. |
| MR. SMEE | MR. ALFRED BISHOP. |
| MR. CHAD | MR. GIRARDOT. |
| MR. TREDGER | MR. ALBERT SIMS. |
| PRESSENGER | MR. PERCY VERNON. |
| BABY RADBONE | MR. STEWART DAWSON. |
| COUNTESS OF CARYL | MRS. STIRLING. |
| LADY NELL | MISS CALHOUN. |
| MRS. DEVENISH | MRS. BERNARD-BEERE. |
| MISS MAPLEBECK | MRS. BANCROFT. |

*Tradespeople, men and women-servants.*

The author referred the critics and the public to *Manner af Börs*, a Swedish romance by Maria Sophia Schwartz, the perusal of which suggested the argument of his play.

Because the play, which was acted for nearly eighty nights, only attracted full houses for the first few weeks of its performance, it was referred to after its withdrawal as having been a failure, and resulting in a loss. This impression was quite erroneous,

for without pretending to rank as a great success, the career of the play was by no means without profit to author and manager. Unfortunately in fame to either it did not answer early hopes, partly owing, it may be, to the high standard of all-round completeness the press and the public had, fairly enough, grown to expect from us—a compliment, however gratifying as a sort of medal awarded for general excellence, by no means without its reverse side. In Mrs. Bancroft's words :

'It would be very interesting to an audience to be given now and then a peep behind the scenes, or in the green-room ; they would often see what good servants to the public are the actors ; how often, when suffering acute pain, they have gone through their work so bravely that the audience has not detected even a look of it. The public owe more to the actor than they will perhaps be prepared to admit. I have known that grand old actress Mrs. Stirling, when suffering from a severe attack of bronchitis, to go to the theatre in all weathers and at great risk, more especially at her age, and when she ought to have been in bed. I have seen her arrive scarcely able to breathe, but insisting upon going through her duties ; this has often been an anxiety, for while admiring her courage, I have feared bad results from it. Mrs. Stirling's sight being impaired, she always dreaded stairs ; and, unfortunately for her, in the hall of Caryl Court there

was a long gallery and then a tall flight of steps leading from it to the stage, while behind the scenes there was another flight to reach this gallery. Luckily she did not enter alone, but had the kindly help of Miss Eleanor Calhoun, who played her daughter in the piece. When Mrs. Stirling was ill, these stairs would naturally be a double anxiety, but she would listen to no change of entrance in the scene which might affect the arrangement of the play, and I often felt anxious about her. One would imagine, to see her slowly and cautiously ascend the flight of steps, stopping every now and then to murmur, "Oh, these stairs!" that she would scarcely be able to get through her part; but although she has stood gasping for breath and terribly ailing, the moment her cue came to go on the stage she seemed to become twenty years younger: vigour returned to her limbs, and she walked with such a firm and stately gait that the change was extraordinary. Her grand voice was alone worth a good walk to listen to, and her acting of the part was as no one else *could* act it.

'This allusion to *Lords and Commons* reminds me of Mr. Brookfield's remarkable "make-up" for Lord Percy Lewiscourt, which was so complete a disguise that when he first entered the green-room I could not for a time imagine who he could be. It was a most wonderful metamorphosis, and his acting of the part added to the list of his numerous clever impersonations.'

We now approach a crisis in our management! the moment when we came to the resolve to retire altogether from its cares. This happened towards the end of 1883. Our impulse was doubtless somewhat hastened by the result of our two last seasons of unthought-of success, and, indeed, by the almost unbroken full tide of prosperity which had followed our perilous removal, achieved, as it had been so often and to our regret, with old material. After dwelling anxiously on the subject in all its important bearings—we even went so far as to fix the date of the realization of our wish, thinking the end of twenty years' management, then some eighteen months distant, would be a fair climax to set upon our labours. But we kept these thoughts at first to ourselves until we felt assured they were not transient. Only those closely connected with the entire control of a popular and successful theatre can know the mental and bodily strain it means, and they alone can count the cost, in wear and tear, which buys its prizes. In considering our decision, the exceptional fact must not be lost sight of that we first held the reins of management at a time of life very early to assume responsibility. Perhaps the date when this determination was made public will be a better moment to give more fully the pros and cons, the whys and wherefores, that governed our resolve.

Although some people were much in love with the play, the attractive powers of *Lords and Commons*

waned sooner than we expected, so we revived *Peril*, which had not been acted since its career of great success at the Prince of Wales's Theatre seven years before. Mr. Burnand's clever *Lesson*, given by the actress to the amateur, was played in conjunction with the more important piece. This programme was a stop-gap while the preparations were completed for a contemplated production of *The Rivals*. As I resigned my original part of Sir George Ormond to Mr. Forbes-Robertson, and appeared for the first time as the moving spirit of the play, the sharp-witted doctor, the cast of *Peril* on February 16, 1884, was entirely new, being as follows: Sir George Ormond, Bart., Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Sir Woodbine Grafton, K.C.S.I., Mr. Alfred Bishop; Captain Bradford, Mr. H. B. Conway; Dr. Thornton, Mr. Bancroft; Mr. Crossley Beck, Mr. C. Brookfield; Percy Grafton, Mr. H. Eversfield; Meadows, Mr. Percy Vernon; Kemp, Mr. Elliot; Lady Ormond, Mrs. Bernard-Beere; Lucy Ormond, Miss Julia Gwynne; Mrs. Crossley Beck, Mrs. Canninge; Sophie, Miss Augusta Wilton.

On this occasion Mrs. Bancroft was again supported in *A Lesson* by Mr. Brookfield in his admirable character-sketch of the old Scotch knight, and by Miss Calhoun and Mr. Forbes-Robertson in the other parts.

It was during the spring of this year that the chief sittings were given for a portrait Mr. Ouless, R.A., painted of me, and which a little later was shown

in the exhibition of the Royal Academy. I look back to the pleasant hours passed in the studio, and many delightful talks while the work progressed, as the commencement of a friendship I highly prize.

Before our account of *The Rivals*, we will tell of events which happened while the play was in preparation, for the King of Terrors was busy with his remorseless scythe. In March came the sad and startling news of the Duke of Albany's sudden death at Cannes. The lessees of the London theatres were informed by the Lord Chamberlain that they were at liberty to exercise their discretion with regard to closing their doors on the night of his Royal Highness's funeral, and by common consent the managers decided to mark their respect for the lamented Prince's memory by suspending all performances. A letter of condolence was addressed to the Prince of Wales by representative leading actors then in London. Mr. Irving was in America, and it fell to my lot, as the senior manager, to forward the document to Mr. (now Sir) Francis Knollys, which was most graciously and cordially acknowledged by his Royal Highness.

In the following month, and, if I remember rightly, on the same day (Good Friday), two distinguished dramatists, whose names have often graced these pages, passed away—Charles Reade and Henry James Byron; the former in his seventieth year, the latter in the prime of life, he being only fifty.

Reade, whose world-wide fame as a novelist and man of letters entitles his name to be enrolled among the literary giants of the age, had long been suffering, and for years had been a martyr to asthma and bronchitis. He was brought home, after a fruitless search for better health on the shores of the Mediterranean, only in time to die in his native land, where his memory will long be honoured. The recollection of his friendship, which we enjoyed for twelve years, and of his many kind and gentle acts, we shall always treasure.

Our pleasure that this feeling was reciprocal may be best imagined when we read, in the 'Life of Charles Reade,' these words:

'Below a very natural and sweet letter of hers, ending with a cordial "God bless you!" Charles Reade has inscribed these words: "Mrs. Bancroft (Marie Wilton), a gifted and amiable artist, who in this letter makes too much of my friendship, which both she and her husband had so richly earned by their kindness and courtesy to me."'

Poor Byron, who, it may not generally be known, was of the same lineage as the immortal poet, as a reference to Lodge or Burke will show, and, as one may imagine his great relative to have been, was a Bohemian to the core. Talking one day at dinner of his distinguished ancestor, when eating heartily of turkey, he said, 'I'm quite ashamed, but I must have some more of that bird.' Mrs. Byron, as he was assisted, remarked, 'My dear Harry, really you'll be

ill; how greedy you are!' He laughed, and replied, 'It's all in honour of the family motto, "*Greedy* (*crede*) *Byron!*"'

During his long career as a dramatic author, which must have spread over a period approaching thirty years, Byron wrote more than a hundred plays and burlesques, in not one of which can be found a single line that the purest-minded person might not have listened to. In this volume will be found a facsimile of our old friend's handwriting in a page of the original manuscript of *A Hundred Thousand Pounds*, which, strange to say, like the fragment of Robertson's manuscript, proves a subsequent change in the name of one of the chief characters—'George' Goodwin appeared in the play-bills as 'Gerald.' In his very early days Byron had also been an actor, Tom Robertson, Fred Younge, and he, once being members of the same company. Later in his life he went upon the stage again, but then only played characters written by himself. His health had long been failing, and it was for some time plainly evident to the few friends he cared to keep about him that his race was nearly run. He grew dreadfully restless, and was constantly changing his home, generally having at least a couple of empty houses on his hands. Within quite a short period we have correspondence dated by him from Eccleston Square, Bedford Square, Clapham Park, and Sutton. One characteristic letter from him will be well placed here.

'Langton Lodge, Sutton, Surrey,
*June* 25, 1882.

'My dear Bancroft,

'I ought to have answered your very kind letter before, but upon my word the weather has been so depressing that I have had no "go" in me, and have not taken up a pen, except under protest and on compulsion, for a month. If the sun would only show up like a man, I should feel like another one, but constant clouds and almost ceaseless winds drive one wretched. Good for the theatres, though. You will both soon enjoy what the papers always madden me by calling a "well-deserved" or "well-earned" holiday, and will, I suppose, seek the Engadine again.

'I hope Mrs. Bancroft has escaped her quondam enemy, hay-fever, this year; I always think of her when passing the carts full of it—hay, not fever.

'I have a lot of work on hand, with a most horrible and revolting distaste for doing it, and the very name of a playhouse drives me frantic. A boy came and left a bill announcing Collette as the *Colonel* at the Public Hall here last week. It is lucky I didn't catch him; but the Sutton boys are very agile. I like Collette, and I like the *Colonel*, but there *are* limits. Arthur Sketchley has been here for two or three days. He left yesterday, but the staircase still trembles.* And now, hoping

* Of course, in allusion to Sketchley's enormous bulk and weight.

you may both enjoy your rest, and with kindest regards,

'Believe me,

'Yours always sincerely,

'H. J. BYRON.'

Poor dear Byron! How handsome he once was! How the hours seemed to fly in his companionship! His very name meant fun. Perhaps no writer ever had a greater power in twisting his language into puns, while his intense appreciation of another's joke was delightful to see.

It would be easy to fill pages with his witticisms; but, without wearying the reader, we both feel compelled to recall one or two of his impromptu jokes.

It was at the little Prince of Wales's Theatre that he first suggested his Shakespearian motto for the box-book keeper, 'So much for *Booking'em!*' which afterwards was sent to *Punch*. There was a carpenter in the theatre, by name Cressy, who was such a particularly quiet, steady man, that it was remarked by several members of the company, who were speaking of him in the green-room, when someone said he understood that Cressy at one time had been a drinker, but that he had *taken the pledge* years ago, and became a changed man. Byron observed, 'Yes, now he is *Water-Cressy*.'

When his play *Dearer than Life* was produced at the Queen's Theatre, in Long Acre, all had gone

well with it until the end of the second act, after which there was a very long delay. The audience grew more and more impatient, the band played waltz after waltz, still the curtain was not taken up. Byron was walking uneasily up and down the corridor at the back of the dress circle, chafing over the mishap, and tugging, as he always did when agitated, at one side of his moustache, when a friendly critic, almost as anxious as himself, came up to him, and said, 'What, in the name of goodness, are they doing?' 'I don't know,' moaned Byron.

At this moment the distinct sound of a saw, hard at work behind the scenes, was heard above the uproar: *saw—saw—saw!* 'What are they doing now, my dear Byron?' 'I think they must be *cutting out the last act!*'

At the time of his disastrous management of the three theatres in Liverpool, an intimate London friend, who met him suddenly in the street, was much struck with his anxious look and altered appearance, and asked sympathetically, 'What's the matter, old fellow—*liver?*' 'Yes,' said Byron languidly, '*Liverpool!*'

The friend couldn't help laughing heartily, but went on, 'Really, now, do take some advice; you've grown so thin. Have you tried cod-liver oil?' Byron replied, 'No; but I've tried Theatre R*oyal!*'

Two of his jokes, which must have been among the last he ever uttered, no doubt found their way

into print, but even at this risk we will venture to tell them here.

One day, at Clapham, where he died, he received a letter from his coachman, who was at the Bedford Square house, about a sick horse. Byron told a friend of the circumstance in this way.

'They won't let me alone even down here; they will worry me about trifles. This morning my fool of a coachman wrote to tell me that a horse was ill, and wanted to know if he might *give him a ball*. I answered, "Oh, yes, if you like, give him *a ball*; but *don't ask too many people!*"' Then adding, through his laughter, 'I don't suppose the fellow will understand it.'

Still later on, he said, 'People are very kind to me. I had no idea so many friends remembered me. I thought myself much more forgotten. Lovely flowers and delicious fruit are brought so often; and game, and other things. Last week a dear old friend sent me a hare. I never saw such an animal; the biggest *hare* that ever ran, I think. I really fancied *Kendal* must be inside it!' (in allusion to the partnership management of the St. James's Theatre by Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal).

NOTE BY M. E. B.

Byron's was a happy-go-lucky nature; everything was sure to be right, because he wished it. He was the epitome of good nature; the most charming companion in the world, often keeping everyone about him in fits of laughter, when it was

most amusing to see him laugh till he cried at his own jokes, and his laughter was so infectious that, no matter what humour one was in, a grave countenance was impossible. He would always write best under pressure. If too much time were given him his work would drag lazily along, and before he had half finished it he would be weary of the subject and want to start on something else.

I well remember his saying to me, 'I have taken a positive dislike to——,' naming a character in the play. 'I won't have anything more to say to him. I made his acquaintance six weeks ago, and I am tired to death of him and his long speeches. He is a poor spirited brute, and he must be locked up; if I meet him again I shall cut him. So will the actor who plays him. So will the critics who see him.' The late Mrs. Byron has often amused me with accounts of how her husband would (when pressed for time) write his plays. If walking with him he would suddenly, as an idea struck him, stop, and on the back of an envelope, leaning against a wall or maybe a house-door, submit it at once to paper for fear of forgetting it. She was always glad when a play was finished, for while it was being written nothing else was talked about. In the middle of a conversation he would rush to his desk to jot down a thought which had just occurred to him. *Wrinkles* would, I am convinced, have been a better play if less time had been given him to write it.

On an occasion when he complained of a cold, and was asked how he caught it, he said that while taking his morning ablution such a capital idea suggested itself to him that he jumped out of his bath to write it down at once.

In a hurried and most earnest manner he, one day, was jotting down an important inspiration, leaning heavily against the hall-door of a house in the neighbourhood of Doughty Street, where he lived, when suddenly it was opened by an elderly lady, who was coming out. Byron fell into the hall, upsetting the lady, who in alarm screamed loudly. The situation must have been very ludicrous, for Byron laughed to such a degree that he couldn't get up, while Mrs. Byron stood on the doorstep trying to explain and apologize ; but the lady, when she recovered herself sufficiently to speak at all, exclaimed, 'Take him away, ma'am, to some asylum!' The more Byron tried to apologize the less able he became to do so, for the sight of the elderly lady, with her bonnet on one side, her bag and umbrella on the mat, and her eyes starting from her head with fright, sent him off into a kind of hysterics. He laughed so much when he told us of this that it was with difficulty we followed the story. We only regretted that he could not introduce the scene into a play ; but he said it would be hard on the Christmas clowns.

He was laid at rest in Brompton Cemetery. Peace be with thy remains, my old friend.

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

We had often contemplated, among other notions (which included Shakespeare's comedy, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, always to be thrown aside for the want of a Falstaff), a picturesque and historical production of *The Rivals*, when an opportunity offered itself, and had bestowed some work and much thought upon a re-arrangement and transition of certain scenes to prevent the frequent change so common and often so unnecessary in the days of Sheridan, and to allow of the intended elaborate picture of old Bath.

To better carry out these plans we sought the aid of Mr. Pinero, who became partly responsible for the version presented of the standard comedy. Mr. Telbin went down to the famous old city to seek authorities and make sketches for his beautiful opening scene, in which so much last-century detail was shown. We must have tried the patience of those kind friends in the reading-room of the British Museum, who cheerfully devoted considerable time towards helping our researches to learn all we could of the fashionable resort of our forefathers—the Carlsbad and Kissingen of their day. We found a mine of information to govern the work of our other scenic artists, and to aid us in producing the play.

The gavotte we introduced in the 'Tea-room' leading from the pump-room, where hung the authenticated portrait of the city's former king, Beau Nash, was the result of some pains, and the

designs for the historically correct and beautiful dresses were made by Mr. Forbes-Robertson.

As regards the distribution of the famous well-known characters in the comedy, it may be there were instances of square pegs in round holes. One of the original notions was a personation of Mrs. Malaprop on novel lines by Mrs. Bancroft, but early rehearsals led us to fear that the experiment would have been at least dangerous, and the idea was abandoned. We decided instead to give the public the certainty of Mrs. Stirling's splendid performance, and also engaged our old friend, Lionel Brough, to repeat his well-known version of the valiant Bob Acres. Mr. Pinero, who had a fancy for the part, undertook the responsibility of Sir Anthony Absolute, the other characters being acted by members of the company as it stood. Influenced perhaps by the remembrance in very early stage days of Leigh Murray's estimate of the thankless part of Faulkland, when he told me that he preferred it to that of Captain Absolute (a choice, I admit, I cannot understand), I resolved to try and force his comically jealous nature into more prominence than it sometimes receives, especially as my playing a minor part enabled us to persuade Mrs. Bernard-Beere to accept the equally thankless task of treating the companion character of the mawkish Julia in the same way. I venture to think that we met with some reward at the hands of the critical.

Perhaps this is the best place to insert an extract

from the bill of the play for Saturday, May 3rd, 1884, before finishing my notes on this costly revival:

'In submitting this performance of Sheridan's comedy, *The Rivals*, for public approval, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft are actuated by the same desire which guided their revival of the *School for Scandal*—a desire to heighten the effect of the author's play without encumbering its action. While strictly preserving the text, it has been found possible, by means of a few transpositions in the dialogue and some variation of locality, to avoid shifting the scenes in view of the audience.

'For this arrangement of the comedy, Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Pinero are jointly responsible.'

Characters:

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE | Mr. A. W. Pinero. |
| SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER | Mr. Alfred Bishop. |
| CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE | Mr. Forbes-Robertson. |
| MR. FAULKLAND | Mr. Bancroft. |
| BOB ACRES | Mr. Lionel Brough. |
| DAVID | Mr. C. Brookfield. |
| FAG | Mr. Elliot. |
| THOMAS | Mr. Percy Vernon. |
| MRS. MALAPROP | Mrs. Stirling. |
| JULIA MELVILLE | Mrs. Bernard-Beere. |
| LYDIA LANGUISH | Miss Calhoun. |
| LUCY | Miss Julia Gwynne. |

I was conscious from the rising of the curtain that a certain hostile feeling reigned in parts of the house; but did not expect, when I first appeared in the play, and paid my visit to Jack Absolute in the picturesque old inn, where 'Ensign Beverley' was lodged in our re-arrangement of the scenery, to be received

with the hooting and hisses that saluted me from a persistent few, and which the mingled cheers and applause of the main audience failed to drown. I remained for some time, apparently unmoved, before the confused uproar abated, and until the performance was over failed to know its reason. I then learnt that it was a resentment, by a few noisy occupants of the upper circle, of a wetting through a sudden shower, which in truth hastened the opening of the doors before the appointed hour, the malcontents being under the impression, I was told, that the attendants were late in their duty.

A letter I wrote to the newspapers on the subject will perhaps better explain the circumstance, and also another incident, indirectly connected with it, which I did not refer to at the time of its occurrence:

'I learn from my correspondence of this morning that the antagonistic reception given to me by a few among the audience at the Haymarket Theatre on Saturday evening had nothing to do with the performance of *The Rivals*, nor was it a revival of the old pit grievance, but the result of an angry feeling caused by the unpleasant effect of a hailstorm which occurred, unfortunately, just before the doors were opened, the cries raised against me when I went upon the stage being for shelter outside the theatre.

'In the autumn of 1882, at the wish of Mrs. Ban-

croft, I erected, at the entrances to the second circle and the gallery of the Haymarket Theatre, two large awnings for use in wet and threatening weather. They were for some time successfully used. On an afternoon in December, 1882, while the awning to the second circle was being put up, one of my servants had the misfortune to let an iron bar fall on the hat of a passer-by. A heavy claim for damages was soon after brought against me. The event was, to avoid adding litigation to other anxieties of theatrical management, that I compromised the matter at a cost of £600. I then did my utmost to get consent for the supports of the awnings to remain permanent fixtures, but this was objected to, so I decided to abolish them altogether, not being anxious for a repetition of the catastrophe.

'If you will publish this letter, it will be a kindness to allow me the opportunity of offering some proof that I have not been unmindful of the comfort of every section of the public who visit the theatre which I have the honour to direct.'

I am inclined to regard the old comedy as a bad selection for elaborate illustration. Its plot and incidents are too disjointed and fragile to bear such detailed treatment as harmonized perfectly with the author's great companion work, the *School for Scandal.*

The full houses the revival attracted for a few

weeks sufficed to more than recoup the large outlay on its production; but the performance never laid a firm hold upon the public, and the play had but a languid existence afterwards.

This season was the least successful we knew at the Haymarket Theatre, as throughout its duration we did not achieve any marked attraction, greatly owing to the small part Mrs. Bancroft had taken in the performances, her appearances being limited to a secondary character in *Lords and Commons* and the revival of *A Lesson*. It may be interesting to state, however, that the result, in spite of these drawbacks, would have ranked as an average season in the old days at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. At its close we resolved upon a long holiday, to allow full reflection before publicly announcing so important a decision as our intended retirement from management.

After playing truant in the previous year, we returned again to the Engadine; and as this will be the last mention we shall make in this book of Pontresina, let me tell a little tale of filial love we learnt there. For five-and-twenty years Madame Leupold, who was a brilliant pianist, and for some time gave lessons to the daughters of the Prince and Princess of Wales, had visited the little village with her son Hugo. Always delicate, she had long been a sufferer, and became a martyr to sleeplessness and neuralgic pain; noise and crowds grew gradually more trying as the power of sleep grew less with

her; and, although she stayed in the quietest inn, even its share of bustle became unbearable. At last she took up her summer quarters in a humble cottage which belonged to the friendly innkeeper. On a grassy slope above was a favoured spot where, when well enough, the little lady would sit for hours, under the shade of a tent-umbrella, attended by the devoted son, who had abandoned his profession, and sacrificed his chances in the race of life, to stay by her side. In the year before they arrived together to spend the summer in the same peaceful way, and as towards evening they reached their destination, the mother's eyes sought her favourite resting-place; she saw to her amazement and regret that a *châlet* had been built upon the nook she knew so well. Horrified, she turned to her son, and exclaimed that Pontresina would never be the same to her again. He consoled her, saying that to-morrow they would seek another corner, and soon prevailed upon her to rest quietly till then. In the morning Hugo went to his mother with the news that he knew all about the little *châlet*—that the owner had not yet taken possession, and that he had the key to show her over it, if she would go with him. With difficulty the son coaxed a reluctant consent from his mother, and tenderly he helped her up the new-made path. Arrived at the porch, he unlocked the door, and they both entered. The invalid's delight and admiration were unbounded at the charming little rooms, with their

lovely views, the tiny kitchen, the open piano, and every detail of pretty furniture. All was complete —nothing was wanting but a master. 'Oh, Hugo, what a little paradise! How quickly it has all been finished; what taste, what comfort! But we must not envy; you say you know who has done all this —tell me who the owner of it is.' He kissed her and said, '*You, mother dear.*'

Silently, with the aid of good friends in the village, had Hugo carried out the building and furnishing of this fairy home, and in his own quiet way he had acted his little play.

Madame Leupold was only spared a few years' enjoyment of her mountain home; her health faded slowly, and not long afterwards she passed quietly away. Her remains lie in a corner of the little village churchyard, where they were borne by the guides through the deep winter snow, and followed by the peasants and the school-children, who chanted by her simple grave the hymns they learnt from her.

I close my allusions to the Engadine with extracts from a letter I wrote to Edmund Yates from the Külm Hotel, describing a journey there, and attempting to give a picture of the winter aspect of St. Moritz:

'By railway from Paris to Coire was pleasant enough; then we first became conscious of the deep

snow, and found that the hotel omnibuses, which usually meet the trains, had given place to sleighs. In one of these we were driven to the comfortable Steinbock. We decided after luncheon to go on to Thusis, where a warning telegram secured us rooms as warm as was our welcome. At daybreak the next morning we started to meet the diligence at Tiefenkasten. Hanging outside the inn there I saw a turkey and some hares, which might so remain, quite fit for food, any time till April ends. Snow soon began to fall, and the cold became intense. In a little open sleigh, the driver standing on a plank behind, we journeyed on to Mühlen, arriving in a rather frozen state, and being still, in such weather, full three hours, if not more, from the summit of the pass. However, our spirits never flagged, and after feeding well, and getting warm, we faced what yet might be before us. Our cavalcade, now numbering thirteen sleighs—some carrying luggage and provisions, the only other passengers being villagers—was marshalled into order by the *conducteur* (as handsome a Swiss as I ever saw, with a head like an old Roman emperor), the vehicle we occupied being chosen to lead the expedition. Here, for the first time, the luxury of a hot-water tin was bestowed upon us. This, with an armful of straw, felt over-shoes, and proportionate covering above, enabled us to face the blinding snow—which froze upon our clothing as it fell—with an amount of courage deserving, I think, some credit.

'To the sonorous peal of bells worthy of a town, but such as in Switzerland enrich every humble village church, and the tinkling of their tiny brethren on the sleighs, we started. Soon the walls of snow on either side grew deeper, while the cold was keener, and the wind more biting than before. One by one even the familiar outlines of the mountains were hidden in the mist: all we saw to mark our path were the tall posts of the telegraph; all we heard, the hum of their wires and the crunching of the frozen snow as the sure-footed beasts dragged us farther and farther on our way.

'Once I was conscious, when we passed a bridge where the snow had drifted, that our road lay at least eight feet above its usual height. I remember, too, conquering by instinct, through a vague fear of frost-bites, a feeling of drowsiness; in this moment I almost wondered if Henry Irving had condemned me to be ever dressed as the Polish Jew, ready to appear when summoned as the vision in *The Bells*; or was I for some unknown crime being driven to Siberia?

'"The shades of night were falling fast"

as we approached the hospice at the top of the pass, and there we fully realized the depth of the snow we had traversed, for it almost hid the neighbouring cattle-houses, leaving only the shape of their roof-tops visible. After a slight halt at the canteen, we started in the dark, but happily without falling snow, to descend the steep zigzags to Silvaplana. The

drivers rarely touched the reins, but left the horses, with heads bent nearly to the ground, to find the way, and the manner they succeeded was quite marvellous. Suddenly we heard a yell behind us, and learnt that one poor beast had floundered in the soft snow, and fallen with his load (fortunately not a human one) below the path; the animal's head alone was visible, but by the combined aid of all the drivers, and encouraged by their fiendish cries, he plunged his way upon the track again, while the men dragged up the sleigh. The delay of some twenty minutes caused by this diversion was not amusing. No other mishap befell us. Slowly we wound our way lower and lower, as the lights of Silvaplana shone brighter and brighter in the valley below. Soon we were housed in a *Wirtschaft*. There, while the horses were changed for the last stage of our journey, we thawed the icicles, which hung even upon our eyelashes, and once again knew warmth.

* * * * *

'The life very much resembles that on shipboard —for, unlike the summer season, people do not now merely come and go—so in a short while everyone seems to know everybody else, which will tell of pleasant and familiar chaff. One good fellow —by name Marshall—who is famous for a large nose, is known among his intimates as *Marshall Nez* (Ney).

'Skating and tobogganing are the chief amusements in the short but lovely days, which have five hours of warm sun, a deep-blue sky, and an atmosphere that is absolutely *still*—free from the trying wind which so often haunts the valley in the summer. The early mornings and the evenings are very cold —outside. There are generally between twenty and thirty degrees of frost in the night, and the thermometer, they tell me, has fallen sometimes five below zero. I never hunted, but should imagine tobogganing (what a word to spell!) to be quite as exciting and exhilarating, with the one advantage that when you come a cropper you begin nearer the floor. The "run" here is three-quarters of a mile in length; at "racing" pace this distance is accomplished in less than a hundred seconds, but to walk up again to the start takes twenty minutes. A lady here neatly likened the amusement to "marrying in haste and repenting at leisure."

'I walked down from the Dorf to the Bad the other day, and after passing the village shops—where they seem to sell everything, from shoelaces to Worcester sauce—I only met on my way one dog, and a small boy trying to skate upon a little pond. The shops, bazaars, and stalls seemed to be hermetically sealed, and one almost wondered if the owners would ever take the trouble to open them again. The big hotels, the Curhaus, the Trinkhalle, were all as silent as the big clock, which had grown tired of telling the hour to no one!'

NOTES BY M. E. B.

To this description by my husband, I add a few impressions of my own: Shall I ever forget the magnificence of the snow-clad Julier Pass? (the Albula is closed in the winter, so the foxes have that vast mountain-range to themselves, and can prowl about without fear of interruption). The difference between summer and winter on these passes is very remarkable; the wonders of the great ice-world are so changed, more especially if one has made a summer excursion to the Engadine, when everything is bright and gay, bespeaking life and merriment. The little villages, with their busy, industrious inhabitants; the children running about full of glee in the hot sun's rays; waters dancing everywhere in wild cascades and rushing streams, the laughing sun in hot pursuit of them; the beautiful emerald-green meadows, dotted with the sweet-faced Swiss cows, munching lazily the tempting grass to the musical accompaniment of their own bells, of which they seem as proud as any lady of her *rivière* of diamonds—all the world seems gay and contented. The pre-Raphaelite colouring of the surroundings is altogether marvellous, and one cannot help feeling how beautiful is the world we live in. In the winter, having made a fair start, with our noses pointed St. Moritz-wards, we settle in our cosy furs; crack goes the whip (a performance which the driver never stints, both when starting and arriving), and away we go in our sleigh, scrunching the dry, crisp snow, which cracks under our weight like starch.

As you look around, you are impressed even more than in the summer by the grandeur of Nature's works and fancies. The still mountain-world is clothed in virgin white, a white so pure and spotless that it seems to give a holy light, as if angels must be near. There are our dear old friends, the burly giant-mountains, gone to sleep with their big white sheets huddled up and gathered round their shrugging shoulders, and their large black eyes of rock glaring down upon us with a warning look, as if to say, 'Dare not to disturb us!' The snow sparkles like diamonds in the sun, and in the clear moonlight like a myriad of moonstones. At last we get to the zig-zags, which take us snake-fashion down into the valley where nestles the village of St. Moritz, and where the fine Kulm Hotel stands, sole monarch of the situation; the Bad below, which is so busy in the summer, is divided from the Dorf by such a gap that they might have quarrelled; the snow appears to have chilled their friendship, and there certainly exists a coldness between them! There is the silent ice-bound lake of emerald green (a green which at home we only see in dreams), partly covered by a veil of snow, looking up with its fixed, glazed eyes to heaven. All is so silent, so impressive, one cannot help wondering and meditating. We almost feel to have no business there, until we become quite mundane when safely housed in our well-kept, warm hotel, with a clever English doctor to minister to our bodily ailments, if we have any. As the shades

of evening close us in, and the bright moon peeps over the mountain-tops, the skies are clothed in tints so exquisite that the night rivals the day in beauty. Beautiful Valley of the Engadine! my true friend: so peace-giving in your summer sweetness, so grandly eloquent and restful in your winter splendour. You are so much nearer the skies than is this heavy, crowded city, and, maybe, that is why I love you!

Our long holiday ended in a pleasant fortnight spent at Brighton, where we were happy, as either hosts or guests, in an interchange of dinners with Baron and Lady Diana Huddleston, the Yates's, the Salas, the Rev. Henry White, Edward Dicey, J. C. Parkinson, and other friends. This was the last we ever saw of our friend Mrs. Sala, a true woman, to know whom meant to esteem and admire her many beautiful qualities. Shortly afterwards she sailed for Australia with her husband, from which country she was destined never to return.

In a letter received from Mr. Sala, bearing date 'Monday, 13th October, 1884,' and which is a beautiful specimen of his marvellous handwriting, are these words:

'I have written this on the back of a slip of "copy" which has served its turn. In the event of my returning from the Antipodes as "a grand pianoforte," this scribble may serve as a memento of

'Yours very faithfully,

'GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.'

At one of these pleasant dinners, Baron Huddleston, who is well and widely known as a *raconteur* with a never-ending budget of professional and other experiences, told a remarkable story of a notorious criminal, whose skill must have been worthy of *Jim the Penman*, which greatly struck us at the time, and vividly recalled the name and fame of our old friend, Wilkie Collins, who would have revelled in its strange details: indeed, it might perhaps have added to the many phantoms he once told us often followed him up the staircase as he went to bed, after writing very late. So far as we are able we will repeat the anecdote in Baron Huddleston's own words.

In the year 1844, not very long after the now 'Last of the Barons' was called to the bar, a man named Bowen was tried for destroying and defacing a register of baptisms, marriages, and burials. He had, it transpired, devoted himself for years to getting up and, as it now seemed, to manufacturing pedigrees. He was desirous of making out a link which was wanting in the title to some property, and he conceived the notion of forging an entry in an old will to effect his object. For this purpose he went to Oxford, and there applied to see the wills of a certain date, for in those days, strange to say, wills were kept in old wine-hampers in the Bodleian Library. The custodian produced a roll of wills of the particular year inquired for, and, while his attention was cleverly diverted for a moment, the man Bowen abstracted one will from the roll without detection.

He took it away, and then, by means of a cunning chemical preparation, removed a passage in the will, and inserted in its place, in handwriting which marvellously imitated that in which the body of the will was written, a description that was essential to support the link in the chain he was forging. Having done this, he paid a second visit to the Bodleian Library, when he again procured the roll of the year wanted, and replaced in it the will which he had so cleverly altered. The roll was subsequently put back into its original repository without its unsuspecting guardian perceiving what had been done. The next step was to apply in due form for a copy of that particular will, and the clerk to the proper officer prepared in the ordinary way to make it for him ; but while engaged in his work he went away to dinner, leaving the copy and the original will open on his desk. During his absence a strong mid-day sun, playing through the window of the office upon the will, brought out the original handwriting, which had been temporarily defaced, and the clerk on his return found, to his amazement, passages in the will which certainly had not been there when he was making the copy before he went to dinner.

This, of course, excited immediate suspicion, and the authorities were on the look-out for the man's return when he should come for the copy he had ordered. The curator had some difficulty in bringing to his mind the face of the scoundrel, but he perfectly well recollected that he had in his possession

a remarkable-looking carpet-bag, from which he had taken some papers. In the meantime, to further carry out and complete his villainous plan, it became necessary to remove the original evidence of the entry which he had destroyed, and for this purpose Bowen went to Pirton Church, in Worcestershire, where, in the parish register of marriages, etc., was the entry which he wanted to remove.

He got the curate to show him the register, and then, feigning illness, while the clergyman went to fetch a glass of water for him, he tore out the entry. The curate, as he moved away, fortunately heard the tearing of the paper, and suspecting foul play, turned back just in time to discover what had been done. He cleverly detained the man while the police were sent for. When Bowen was apprehended, and the proofs of his guilt made apparent, he had in his possession at the time the identical carpet-bag which had engaged the attention of the custodian at Oxford, and in it were found pieces of old faded parchment, a small stock of chemical preparations, various coloured inks, pens, etc. Bowen was tried for this offence and convicted before Lord Chief Justice Tindal, and although a point of law was argued before the fifteen judges the conviction was affirmed, and he was sentenced to seven years' transportation.

There could not be more kindly host and hostess than Baron and Lady Diana Huddleston, whose devotion to her husband, and never-wearying care during his recent serious attacks of illness, cannot

fail to excite the admiration of all who have the privilege of their acquaintance. I own to a great affection for 'Lady Di,' and value her friendship very highly. During a delightful visit to their pretty, cosy, comfortable 'Grange' at Ascot, and while walking through the well-kept grounds, an unexpected amusement presented itself, for we heard the sound of a brass band, which seemed quite close. Presently the Baron came along hurriedly, and told us that the band of the Bisley Farm School (I think it was so called), which is composed of poor boys who are boarded, lodged, taught music, and to play various instruments, were performing some selections in the neighbourhood. Would we like them to be invited into the grounds, that we might hear them? We were delighted with the idea, and by-and-by in they all marched, headed by their leader and instructor. Meanwhile Lady Diana and my husband had seated themselves in a tiny arbour, so that the boys, not seeing her ladyship take any active part in their reception, concluded that I, who, accompanied by the Baron, met them as they came along, must be their hostess. They played some well-known airs, ably led by their conductor, in a remarkable manner for boys so young. One little fellow amused me particularly; I think he must have had a troublesome cold in his head, for there was a crystal tear at the tip of his nose which remained stationary. No exertion over his clarionet, even when playing *forte*, seemed to dis-

turb its position. This attracted my attention, and I could not help speculating as to its ultimate destination.

When the boys had finished their selection, I made a speech to them, in which I reminded them 'how much they were indebted to the friendly and charitable society which had taken such pains to teach them music, thereby providing them with a source of livelihood in the future, and that I hoped they would never cease to be grateful to their benefactors.' They were all affected by the address, especially the blower of the clarionet, who, being on the point of crying, much imperilled the hitherto firm steadiness of the crystal appendage. My limited audience consisted of the Baron, who stood by me thoroughly enjoying the whole performance, Lady Diana and my husband, who were sitting a little further off, laughing heartily. When I came to the end of my speech I bade them play 'God save the Queen.' There was a slight difference of opinion amongst the instruments, but on the whole they got through the anthem very satisfactorily. When this was over I called for 'three cheers for the Queen;' the little fellows shouted with all their hearts and lungs. Then I said 'one more,' to which they responded with the same spirit. 'One more,' I cried, and just as they were about to break forth again louder than ever, I continued, '*for me.*' They were amused and delighted, and gave me a very warm and hearty cheer, but the effort of shouting

had evidently alarmed and disturbed the crystal tear; it had disappeared, but *where* it travelled, far or near, I never ascertained. After this ceremony the Baron and I marched the little musicians into the house to the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne,' and as I had never seen them before, I thought the air so appropriate! In a long room, tea, cakes, bread and butter, jam, and all sorts of good things had been ordered by the Baron and Lady Diana, and prepared at short notice by their kindly cook. After a splendid tea, and a good look at the birds and animals which the Baron and Lady Diana love to have about them, the boys left the Grange, delighted with their visit, and fully convinced, I am sure, that I was the 'lady of the manor.'

FURTHER NOTES BY AND TO S. B. B.

We had now ample time for reflection, and did not swerve from our intention to abandon management at the close of one more season, and to limit our subsequent responsibilities, with regard to our art, to occasional appearances as actors only. Many of our arguments were doubtless commonplace enough, as to some extent they must be in weighing any such decision. Running uphill is a delightful game, especially if you are so fortunate as to succeed in even sighting the top; but one false step there may hurl you quickly down again!

To our near friends, and to those whom we thought sufficiently interested in such a matter, we

wrote privately before making the public announcement of our intention. From the many replies we received perhaps the following extracts will not be without interest to the general reader.

Mr. Burnand wrote, and, of course, in a characteristic vein:

'DEAR B.,

'You are a lucky man, and a wise one. A deservedly fortunate pair, and a sagacious couple.

'At *your* age to be able to retire!! My! Wouldn't *I* if I could! But I shall *never* be able to retire; never free, never out of harness, until I lie down in the loose-box and am carried off to the knacker's, unless I go to the dogs previously by some shorter and cheaper route.

'Yours ever,

'F. C. B.'

In spite of a severe attack of illness these sympathetic lines were penned by their accomplished author:

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,

'Under any circumstances I should have read your letter with true interest and pleasure, but at a time of suffering and depression your remembrance of our old friendship is doubly precious and doubly dear to me. With all my heart, I congratulate you and Mrs. Bancroft on retirement from the toils and cares of a career of management, which will be

remembered among the noblest traditions of the English stage.

'Always truly yours,

'WILKIE COLLINS.'

We received the following from an old friend of many years' standing, and heartily shared his regret that we had not been associated with more of his work:

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,

'I congratulate you heartily upon what I am sure is a subject of congratulation to Mrs. Bancroft and yourself, however discomforting your retirement from management must necessarily be to all play-goers. I only regret that I have not had an opportunity of contributing appreciably to the successful result of your twenty years' work.

'With kindest regards to Mrs. Bancroft,

'I am, very truly yours,

'W. S. GILBERT.'

There could be no more competent critic of the circumstances than our old comrade who wrote this letter:

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,

'I am delighted, though not surprised, to learn that you are in the proud position of being able to retire in the prime of your life from our harassing and wearying profession.

'You have both worked well and loyally, have done the stage the highest service, and well deserve your rest.

'That the same good fortune which has attached itself to you in your public career may follow you in all things in your private life is the very sincere wish of your old friend and fellow-worker,

'JOHN HARE.'

From a well-known lover of the drama, one to whom we have owed for many years constant acts of kindness, came this warm expression of regret:

'DEAR MR. BANCROFT,

'Lady Londesborough and myself regretted extremely to learn of the determination of Mrs. Bancroft and yourself to retire from management.

'You have certainly done so much in every sense for your profession (for the difference in the production of pieces, and the rise in the salaries, and consequently in the position of actors and actresses, is mainly owing to you), that you may fairly claim a right to retire; but we shall all sadly miss you both.

'We hope that you will remember to keep a box for us on the melancholy occasion of your farewell, to which we shall certainly go, whenever it may be, and whatever engagement we may have.

'Believe me,

'Yours very truly,

'LONDESBOROUGH.'

Here is a fragment from a charming letter written by Mr. W. W. Ouless, R.A.

'Thank you very much for your kind letter, and the mark of friendship, which I warmly appreciate.

'I hope Mrs. Bancroft and you will have many, many years of happiness, and that we shall long enjoy the advantage of seeing the actor even greater for having thrown off the care of management.'

Mr. J. C. Parkinson's words bespeak his true friendship for us :

'I have none of the mixed feeling that will animate those who are naturally pained at losing so much out of their side of your lives. *Mine* is unqualified rejoicing at your timely wisdom. As one of the public, I shall not lose you altogether as artists, and as private friends (by far my strongest part) I hope to be drawn closer to you both in a thousand ways. The wisdom of it! The wisdom of it! If I were absolute fairy monarch, and could decree for you, I would have fixed matters beyond the possibility of retreat precisely as you have fixed them for yourselves.'

Mr. Pinero sent us the following generous and valued words :

'It is my opinion, expressed here as it is elsewhere, that the present advanced condition of the English stage—throwing as it does a clear, natural

light upon the manners and life of people, where a few years ago there was nothing but mouthing and tinsel—is due to the crusade begun by Mrs. Bancroft and yourself in your little Prince of Wales's Theatre. When the history of the stage and its progress is adequately and faithfully written, Mrs. Bancroft's name and your own must be recorded with honour and gratitude.'

It was with great pleasure that we read the following from Mr. B. C. Stephenson ('Bolton Rowe'):

'I cannot help telling you how much I regret to hear that Mrs. Bancroft and yourself have made up your minds to retire from management.

'If any two human beings ever deserved repose, certainly you do, and it must be a great satisfaction to be able to claim it at the time when the tide of your success is at its highest.

'Since you took the Prince of Wales's Theatre in hand, the English stage has altered much, and no one has had more to do with its alteration and improvement than yourselves. There is scarcely a theatre in London that does not show the mark of your work, and seldom does a good performance take place without the help of some one who has passed his apprenticeship under your management.'

That distinguished dramatic critic, Mr. Moy Thomas, with whom we have only enjoyed a bare acquaintance, wrote thus:

'The influence of your reign, both at the Prince of Wales's and at the Haymarket, will remain and grow. It is easy, as Tennyson says, to sow when you have the seed. Others have done something towards the remarkable revival of dramatic art in our days, but there is all the difference in the world between originating and following.

'As to Mrs. Bancroft, who is there who will not wish to her, and all dear to her, a long life of happy leisure, and many a pleasant evening in *front* of the curtain?'

We cannot better close these extracts than by the congratulations of our old friend Mr. Edmund Yates:

'My dear B.,

'I am heartily delighted at the news which I received from you ten minutes ago, and I most warmly congratulate you both on your sensible decision.

'Few persons who have not actually been "in the profession" could know so well as I do what that decision means. The triumphs, the applause, the delights of conquering difficulties and converting them into glories, the top-tree position striven for so sedulously, earned with such labour and pains—all these have to be relinquished. But, oh! the exquisite joy of being your own master, of snapping your fingers at the public, careless whether they come or stay away, of being wholly independent of heat or "Healtheries," or anybody's grim patronage!

'To our thinking you have decided most wisely, and we wish you heartiest and happiest enjoyment of your coming enfranchisement.

'Always both of yours,

'E. Y.'

## CHAPTER XI.

### OUR FAREWELL SEASON: 1884-85.

'MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT beg to announce that this will be their Farewell Season. Soon after the twentieth anniversary of the opening of the Prince of Wales's Theatre on April 15th, 1865, they will retire from management.'

These few words caused a considerable stir in the theatrical world; they not only drew forth much comment, but leading articles in many of the chief newspapers.

One important morning journal 'interviewed' us, and something of what we said on the subject at the time may more faithfully give our reasons than words since thought out might do:

'When Mr. Bancroft is asked "why he and Mrs. Bancroft are giving up their managerial position while in the prime of life," he answers promptly enough: "For several reasons, which, to us at least, appear good. We think it better to retire while we are, if it may be said with due modesty, high in

public favour, one iota of which we should be sorry to lose. In a few more years we might be lost among the crowd of those who have since ourselves attempted to put pieces adequately on the stage, both as to acting and scenery. The distinct reputation we have acquired by years of hard work we wish to keep; and we should like to enjoy some of the fruit from the trees we have planted and laboriously cultivated. It is frequently overlooked that the management of a theatre involves a great deal of attention every day, to say nothing of the perpetual strain of always working months ahead. When you add to this the tedium of rehearsals and the exertion of acting at night, it makes life a round of work. We do not complain. The public have repaid our liberality in management by yet larger liberality. But we are content to rest and be thankful before our distinctive work is forgotten or merged in that of others."

'"You are, I think, responsible in great measure for the present high salaries paid to actors, and for the costly manner in which the public look to see plays put upon the stage?"

'"In great measure, certainly, for the latter, and almost wholly for the former. We do not pretend for a moment that we invented sumptuous *mise en scène*, but we happened to be the persons who brought it so into fashion, as it were, as to secure general imitation or adoption, and that care in little things which has since become almost universal; for

it was at the old Prince of Wales's Theatre that the example was set of putting every piece on the stage in a realistic way—our stage-rooms became, in fact such sumptuous apartments that I remember Sir William Fergusson once saying that "the only drawback to visiting our theatre was that it disgusted him with his own home." It was also our ambition to have every small part in a comedy played as well as possible, and after continued preparation. We began with three weeks' rehearsal for a play, afterwards extended to six, since to a couple of months, and in some cases longer."

'"And the payment of actors?"

'"Salaries have risen, certainly, to an extraordinary extent. A few instances may be amusing. During our career we have paid the same actor, for playing the same part in the same piece, eighteen and sixty pounds a week, with an interval of some ten years only. There are cases, of course, in which an actor improves his position so rapidly as to command a great increase of salary in the same theatre: for instance, we ended by giving a member of our company ten times the salary at which we originally engaged him; and another, who first received nine pounds a week, was last paid fifty. Such prices would have appeared fabulous twenty years ago, When that great artist, Mrs. Stirling, played in *Caste* at the Haymarket Theatre, she received seven times the salary of the original representative of the Marquise de St. Maur."

'"What is the highest salary you have ever paid?"

'"For a special engagement a hundred pounds a week, with other charges and contingencies. No, it was not to Mrs. Langtry! When we induced Miss Ellen Terry to return to the stage in 1875, she was content with twenty pounds a week, which was considered a high price then. Our finding her, and bringing her back to the stage, is one of our brightest recollections. It was a victory which consoled us amply for an awful defeat. Our *Merchant of Venice* was not merely what the French call 'a baking,' and we English theatrical people call 'a frost'—it was a perfect Moscow!"'

NOTES BY S. B. B.

This rise in salaries was commenced by an unswerving objection to the old custom of all the leading members of a company taking an annual benefit—a system which we worked hard to exterminate, for I strongly hold the opinion that 'benefits' should only be given to actors in distress through illness, or in aid of their families should they be left unprovided for, and on behalf of charitable institutions. A further reason for the increase in actors' incomes may be traced to the acceptance of engagements for special parts and runs of plays instead of for fixed and lengthened periods, as was formerly a general custom.

But to return to our retirement from management—Were there not many other good and valid

reasons? What would a barrister say to pleading the same cause for one, two, or three hundred days running, with no occasional rising of the court, even if given the variety of appealing to a fresh jury? Long runs of plays are wonderfully remunerative to the manager, and a great relief from anxiety and work, but must be, eventually, very destructive to our art. After about fifty consecutive nights, in my poor belief, the actor has done all in his power with any part; to say nothing of having then played it to the most appreciative audiences, for that time will have been more or less taken up by keen theatre-goers, and he will afterwards often find himself acting to many who only by the programme know so much as his name. Except at intervals, after some such first run, would it be to the actor's professional advancement to constantly repeat any character, such occasional performances would suffice for showing new ideas and improvements. I think I am inclined, in talking of long runs, to remember the words of the immortal Siddons, when she first entered Drury Lane Theatre, before the original enormous size of its interior was reduced. The great actress looked quietly round the vast building, and then said, with a sigh: 'Behold the tomb of the drama!'

Besides, for our wants, and the claims upon us, we had all we needed. Great wealth, I fancy, must be a considerable anxiety, and I often think of words I heard spoken by a well-known man of vast riches when asked at a club if he could mention what parti-

cular advantages he derived from the possession: 'One only comes to my mind,' he replied. 'I can afford to be robbed.'

There is but little to tell of the acting during this farewell season, for it was mainly given up to short revivals of familiar plays—the first and most successful of them being *Diplomacy*, which had not been acted in London since its production at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, nearly seven years before. Although the piece was well played and splendidly received, it was almost impossible for the new cast to vie with the distribution we first gave it, no less than four of the original members being at the date of its revival engaged in management themselves — Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. John Clayton, and Mr. Arthur Cecil—while neither of ourselves retained our former characters. Mrs. Bancroft was glad to resign the sorrows of Zicka to the capable hands of Mrs. Bernard-Beere, 'whose handsome and imposing presence,' she said, 'were much more fitted to the character,' and to 'write up' for herself into a prominence, which proved of great value to the revival, the minor but more congenial part of Lady Henry Fairfax, which, out of slight material, became an important and enjoyable character. Her amusing description of the Berne clock will be long remembered. On the other hand I gave up, with many a sigh, my favourite Orloff to Mr. Barrymore, a clever actor best known in America, who joined our company for the purpose, thinking

that on the whole I should best serve the general effect as Henry Beauclerc, which part was made so marked a feature when we first produced *Diplomacy* by the admirable acting of John Clayton, whose recent death has been a great loss to the stage. Miss Le Thiere's excellent performance of Don Alva's widow alone remained of our first distribution. The cast on Saturday, November 8th, was as follows: Henry Beauclerc, Mr. Bancroft; Julian Beauclerc, Mr. Forbes-Robertson; Algie Fairfax, Mr. Elliot; Count Orloff, Mr. Barrymore; Baron Stein, Mr. C. Brookfield; Markham, Mr. York; Antoine, Mr. Charles Eaton; Lady Henry Fairfax, Mrs. Bancroft; Marquise de Rio-Zarès, Miss Le Thiere; Countess Zicka, Mrs. Bernard-Beere; Dora, Miss Calhoun; Mion, Miss Polak. The demonstration when the curtain finally fell was so great as to compel a personal response, which came in these few hastily-thought-over words:

'Ladies and Gentlemen—I have so seldom ventured to address you, and have not troubled you with what have grown to be called "first-night speeches," that you will excuse my thinking your applause to-night to be in some way a wish that I should break my rule. It would be affectation not to know that part of that applause is provoked by the announcement of our intended retirement from the work—the very hard work, however successful—and the duties of theatrical management. What I may have

to say on that subject—which will be far more on behalf of that distinguished member of the profession she adorns, Mrs. Bancroft, than for my own poor part—must, I am sure you will agree with me, be still a little while delayed.

'I will only say now that, perhaps, I have the opinion that no one in any walk of life should keep a position of command too long; and if my wife and I between us have held the reins of management for nearly twenty years, you must forgive us on the plea that we were both exceptionally young when we first took them up.

'Ladies and gentlemen, for all your great kindness to us believe in our gratitude, and let us hope that we shall never forfeit your regard.'

Sardou's *Theodora* was produced in Paris soon afterwards at the Porte St. Martin, and although a brilliant picture of the days of Justinian offered temptation as a final managerial blaze, we decided that the game was hardly worth the candle. Again we contemplated a revival of Boucicault's *Old Heads and Young Hearts*, the author kindly agreeing to revise his work; but we found at rehearsal that inexorable Time had played his part too well, and thought the comedy somewhat old-fashioned. Other ideas included the production of an original comedy written by the accomplished Ouida, the charming dialogue in which did not, to our great regret, compensate for a lack of incident, and that dreadful

difficulty to so many delightful writers—construction. It is not an easy task to write, as it were, a three-volume novel in about a tenth of its usual space, and without a descriptive page or the aid of a marginal note.

Just before the withdrawal of *Diplomacy*, we narrowly escaped the catastrophe of fire. A piece of scenery in the garden outside the house at Monte Carlo caught light, and at once alarmed the audience. I immediately took Mrs. Bancroft by the arm, and we walked on the stage together, and stood close to the flame; this presence of mind calmed those who were agitated, while a fireman happily extinguished it with one of the buckets of water and a wet blanket, which are always kept in readiness. The audience behaved with remarkable composure, and, happily, all was well.

My old friend Hare occupied the chair on Ash-Wednesday (the theatres were still closed then) at the banquet of the Dramatic and Musical Sick Fund, and on the occasion I had the privilege of proposing his health in these terms:

'Rising so late in the evening to have the honour of saying a few words, I fear they would seem, after the eloquence we have listened to, very like a weak after-piece following a strong play, did I not at once claim your patience by assuring you that the interest of my story begins with the rising of the curtain, for the great pleasure falls to my lot of asking you to

drink to your chairman's health. Mr. Hare is surrounded by many old and dear friends, but I think I may venture to say that I am the oldest, at least of his theatrical friends, for it is now a little over twenty years since we first met in a country theatre, when he was little more than a boy, and I in my early manhood. A friendship was then cemented which has withstood the storms of this fierce fight of life, and remains to me now—one of my most cherished sentiments. There is little need for me to remind you of Mr. Hare's career; of the ten years—perhaps the ten happiest years of my life—he served under the flag of Mrs. Bancroft and myself at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; of the delightful creations on that stage for which we were so indebted to him; nor, when the time came for him to leave us, how our loss was the public gain, as the accomplished actor soon developed into the accomplished manager. In that capacity you may perhaps, in your kindness, accept my admiration for Mr. Hare's work as, in some small way, the opinion of an expert. Without further preface, I ask you to join me in the pleasure of drinking to the health of your chairman, who, as actor and manager, has done much to adorn and uphold the art of which he is so distinguished a follower.'

We next played in *Masks and Faces*, Mr. Forbes-Robertson being the Pomander; Mr. Barrymore, Ernest Vane; Mr. Brookfield, Colley Cibber; Mr.

Kemble and Mr. Wyatt the two critics, Soaper and Snarl; and Miss Calhoun, Mabel Vane. The favourite old comedy was warmly welcomed, and many critics dwelt on the regret evoked by our approaching intention, which they kindly said our acting in this revival served largely to increase.

It was a great gratification to me to find unqualified and ungrudging praise given to my third attempt to act the part of Triplet, a performance, whatever its true value, upon which I had bestowed infinite pains. All previous reservations seemed to be withdrawn, and my determination to be fully acknowledged as, in truth, not only an actor of what may be called modern swelldom was, dare I hope? achieved. A very able and, if I may be allowed to say so, not too easily-pleased critic, Mr. William Archer, did me the honour to write his opinion in these words: 'There is no more delicate, more pathetic, more lovable piece of acting than Mr. Bancroft's Triplet on the English stage. The green-room scene appeals to me more irresistibly every time I see it. Such acting would move a heart of stone or an eye of glass. Everyone who has not seen it should see it forthwith, and everyone who has seen it once, twice, or thrice should see it again, even to the seventh time.' The writer of those lines doubtless does not know how much—with many other ably if too generously expressed compliments—they meant to me.

It may be that the revived interest taken by journalists in theatrical matters went hand in hand

with some productions at the little Prince of Wales's Theatre, and it is also probable that much which is beautiful in our art might have been at least retarded but for the keen love and knowledge of the drama possessed by Mr. J. M. Levy, who was, there can be no doubt, the first proprietor of a leading newspaper to regularly give to the subject the space never bestowed upon it with any constancy before. Other journals then followed an example which allowed their writers to greatly help the stage by giving, instead of, as was so often the case in the old days, mere reports of plays, extended and sympathetic reviews upon the work of both the manager and the actor.

My opinion of those who so ably fill the onerous position of writing about the theatre I ventured to comprise in the farewell words I spoke on the part of Mrs. Bancroft and myself when we left the Haymarket Theatre—those words in which I endeavoured to express our deep obligations for constant kindness and encouragement extending from the days of Oxenford, Bayle Bernard, Leicester Buckingham, and others since dead, to those of their accomplished successors, to name whom would be invidious—will be found at the close of this chapter.

To those brief but earnest sentences I would like to add one more thought of the critics and the fulfilment of their work. While sitting in judgment, and in apportioning their praise, perhaps I may be ex-

cused for thinking that some among them do not always judge with sufficient care of the ease or difficulty of the actor's immediate task. It may be that certain parts are so easy to play as to be, or as should be, within the means of many able actors; while, on the other hand, the difficulties of other characters may be so great, almost so insurmountable, that praise may not be always freely enough given to efforts which, without even nearing the goal, are far in the right direction towards the complete realization only within the means of the highest command of acting. I give these views in all humility, and from an actor's point of view. Perhaps the critic's answer would be that it is a technical question, and that it is hardly his business to draw these fine lines; but thought on the subject, at least, would produce no harm, nor would discussion hurt the art dramatic critics have in recent years done so much to serve.

We felt that the name of Robertson, so intimately associated with our career, should be connected, if only for a short time, with our farewell season, and we arranged with the author's son to give some final performances of *Ours*, having definitely said good-bye to *Caste* and *School* in 1883. This oft-tried friend was at least an appropriate farewell to the six comedies of which series it had been the most frequently revived, although, speaking personally and selfishly, I am bound to say that the monotony of again acting a part which I thought I had done

with for ever was greatly increased by tedious rehearsals with those new to the play, and almost amounted to pain. When I resigned myself with a deep sigh to the inevitable, and was discovered, in the opening scene, asleep under the shade of a big tree, as I heard the familiar air, the 'Chanson de Fortunio,' which was played for the rising of the curtain, I had a sort of brief, wild dream. I thought the tune in cradle-days had been my lullaby, and wondered if it would be chosen for my requiem.

The familiar parts were mostly in new hands, as follows: Prince Perovsky, Mr. C. Brookfield; Col. Sir Alexander Shendryn, Mr. Kemble; Angus MacAlister, Mr. Barrymore; Hugh Chalcot (for the last times), Mr. Bancroft; Sergeant Jones, Mr. E. Maurice; Lady Shendryn, Miss Victor; Blanche Haye, Miss Calhoun; Mary Netley (for the last times), Mrs. Bancroft.

Next came a 'scratch bill,' of which the principal item was *Sweethearts*, in which we acted for the first time at the Haymarket; Mr. Gilbert's ever-charming play being followed by *Good for Nothing*, Mrs. Bancroft again appearing as poor Nan; these pieces being preceded by a curtailed version of *Katharine and Petruchio*, as arranged by David Garrick from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio being played by Mr. Forbes-Robertson, Grumio by Mr. Kemble, Biondello by Mr. C. Brookfield, and Katharine by Mrs. Bernard-Beere.

I very nearly decided upon essaying the strange

character of Tartuffe, which has not, I think, been acted in English since Webster played it, in place of reviving the old Shakespearian fragment; but I stood in need of greater time to mature my thoughts about it than the approaching close of the season would have given me.

These performances, and a few final repetitions of *Diplomacy* and *Masks and Faces*, brought us to the eventful night of our farewell; but before we speak of that, it may be well to dispose of one or two other matters which we have not yet mentioned.

Rumours and inferences, after awhile, were afloat that one reason for our retirement was that management at the Haymarket had not been so successful as at our former theatre. I took no notice of the reports at the time, thinking, with one of Gilbert's amusing creations at the Savoy Theatre, 'that it really didn't matter.' Eventually, however, I found it advisable to publicly contradict the error in these words:

'In your interesting article, "Plays at Popular Prices," you are kind enough to speak of me in these terms: "Mr. Bancroft was the pioneer of the dear stall. He abolished the pit at the theatre designed under his eye. Eventually he had gracefully to confess to failure, and it would be well if those who followed his lead admitted an error in judgment."

'It is true that in 1874, owing to constantly increasing outlay at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, I

instituted the ten-shilling stall; but I must decline to be held responsible if managers of less expensive theatres thought fit to follow my lead, nor is it now my affair as to whether the moment has come for some lessees to consider a re-arrangement of their charges for admission. But on part of the sentences I quote from your paper I have, if you will permit me, something to say. As I never had reason to regret either being "the pioneer of the dear stall" or having "abolished the pit," I don't know to what failure I "had gracefully to confess."

I have always refrained from parading the profits and losses of management; but I am not sorry—more in justice to the Haymarket Theatre as a property than in defence of the line of action I pursued there—that your friendly remarks give me an opportunity to contradict what I have read in several newspapers—in words sometimes veiled, sometimes more outspoken—that the resignation of management by Mrs. Bancroft and myself was partly due to the tide of success which followed our efforts at the smaller theatre not having flowed so freely towards the larger house. Let me add that I am willing and prepared to substantiate the following statements in the completest way:

'Briefly, then, our management of the Haymarket Theatre (notwithstanding the large amount expended in its reconstruction, which was borne entirely by us) resulted in almost doubling the sum we had realized at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. This end

was achieved by comparatively short "runs," and a consequent great increase of work, the strain of which we soon began to feel. Our resolve to retire from management was arrived at in November, 1883; in October, 1884, that determination was made public; in July, 1885, it took effect. *Voilà tout!*

At this stage of our book a synopsis of our various productions and a brief account of their ratio of success will, I imagine, deserve the attention of those who may be called, in a way, 'behind the scenes,' while, perhaps, the statement will not be altogether without interest for the general reader.

The natural beginning is to speak first of the six Robertson comedies. *Society* was produced in 1865, was revived twice at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in 1868 and 1874, and once at the Haymarket, in 1881; counting performances in the provinces, we played *Society* nearly five hundred times. *Ours* was produced in 1866, was revived three times at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in 1870, 1876, and 1879, and twice at the Haymarket, in 1882 and 1885, being acted by us seven hundred times. *Caste* was produced in 1867, and was revived twice at the little theatre, in 1871 and 1879, once at the Haymarket in 1883, being played by us, including performances at the Standard Theatre, six hundred and fifty times. *Play* was produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1868, and ran one hundred and six

nights. It was never revived by us. *School* was produced in 1869, and was once revived at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in 1873, and twice at the Haymarket, in 1880 and 1883, being acted by us eight hundred times. *M.P.* was first played in 1870 for one hundred and fifty-six nights, and, like *Play*, was never revived by us. This calculation makes in all nearly three thousand performances of the Robertson comedies, representing, in fact, the evenings, counting rehearsals and deducting Sundays, of ten years of life!

No words—at least no power over words at my command—can add anything to this brief statement. Ten years of life!

The ratio of success achieved by these six comedies was as follows: *School*, first; *Ours*, second; *Caste*, third; *Society*, fourth; *M.P.*, fifth; *Play*, sixth.

As to our other plays, their degrees of success were in the following order: *Diplomacy*, two runs, first; *Masks and Faces*, three runs, second; *Money*, three runs, third; *Fedora*, one run, fourth; *Peril*, two runs, fifth; *Sweethearts* is difficult to place, as it was not long enough to form the sole attraction, but it undoubtedly drew large houses during two runs.

Of other plays acted for one run only, five of them were almost level in result. At the Prince of Wales's the *School for Scandal*, *M.P.*, and *London Assurance* (which was aided materially by being played with the *Vicarage*); at the Haymarket *Odette* and the *Overland Route*. All these pro-

ductions proved very attractive, but for less periods than those previously named.

Then came seven others, which were also all successful, but in a lesser degree and in the following sequence: *Man and Wife*, *Play*, *An Unequal Match*, and *A Hundred Thousand Pounds* at the Prince of Wales's; at the Haymarket *Lords and Commons*, *The Rivals*, and *Plot and Passion* (the last-named had the great advantage of the companionship of *A Lesson*).

The plays produced by us at the Prince of Wales's Theatre which failed were *The Merchant of Venice*, *How She Loves Him*, *Tame Cats*, *Wrinkles*, and *Duty*.

No production of a new play, or revival of an old one, failed to attract during our management of the Haymarket Theatre.

Taking our plays together, the principal successes were achieved in this order:

*For one run:*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *School* | Prince of Wales's | - | First. |
| *Diplomacy* | Prince of Wales's | - | Second. |
| *Fedora* | Haymarket | - | Third. |
| *Ours* | Haymarket | - | Fourth. |
| *Masks and Faces* | Haymarket | - | Fifth. |
| *Peril* | Prince of Wales's | - | Sixth. |

*Counting all runs of each play at both theatres:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *School* | - | First. |
| *Ours* | - | Second. |
| *Diplomacy* | - | Third. |
| *Masks and Faces* | - | Fourth. |
| *Caste* | - | Fifth. |
| *Money* | - | Sixth. |

NOTE BY M. E. B.

It may have interest here if I tell the reader, having ceased playing them for ever, which, of all the parts Tom Robertson wrote for me, I liked the best. In this hope I will classify my preference in rotation. First, Naomi Tighe, in *School*. Second, Polly Eccles, in *Caste*. Third, Cecilia Dunscombe, in *M.P.* Fourth, Mary Netley, in *Ours*. Fifth, Rosie Fanquehere, in *Play*. (Of Maud Hetherington, in *Society*, I need not speak, as the play, it will be remembered, was not originally written for us.) Many lovers of the old plays will, perhaps, be surprised at my preference, as I am under the impression that Polly Eccles may be thought to have been my favourite character. No, it was not. I love Polly for the innate fine qualities of her nature; her devotion to her dissolute, worthless father; her filial desire to screen the worst side of his nature (if there could be a worse) by trying to make him appear a little better in the estimation of others. Her love for her sister; her real goodness under a rough exterior; the under-current of mischief and keen appreciation of humour. All these genuine qualities appealed to me largely, and I hope I understood them, otherwise I do not think I could have made the impression in the part which I am told I did. I thoroughly enjoyed the boundless love of fun, the brisk gaiety of Polly's happy nature, and I felt acutely the pathos of her serious scenes.

The character is very dramatic in parts, and requires all the nervous acting I could bring to bear

upon it. The last act of *Caste* is the longest I ever appeared in, and I believe one of the longest in the whole range of the Drama, for it often played nearly an hour and an half, and Polly is but seldom off the stage throughout it. Almost every word she has to say is a pearl, so to speak, and affects the audience more or less. Hers is always a welcome presence, for everyone loves Polly: I am naturally very proud of my success in the part, and feel happy in all that is now left to me—the remembrance of it. Success *must* bring pleasure, and 'labour's light as ease when with cheerfulness 'tis done;' and although Polly is not my favourite character, still I love her for her strange mixture of boisterous fun, tenderness, and affection. The sudden transitions, too, from broad comic humour to deep feeling pleased me, and my heart was therefore in my work. In the situation where George D'Alroy suddenly returns from India when he is thought to be dead, I felt the reality of the scene so thoroughly that I cried every night when acting it. Polly Eccles, as a work of art, did me more credit than all the others, and doubtless, as an artistic effort, stands first in the rank, for she is a difficult part to play, the range of feeling must be very wide to fully reproduce the intentions of the author. *Caste* is assuredly Tom Robertson's *chef-d'œuvre*, and one of the cleverest plays written in my time. Well, then why, in the face of all this, was not Polly Eccles my favourite part?

I fear I can only give a woman's reason, and say

that 'it was not': I certainly felt happier when I was playing Naomi Tighe—dear 'Nummy!' I affectionately hug the memory of 'Nummy,' and wear her in my 'heart of hearts' as freshly as though I were still representing her. The artless simplicity and sunny nature of 'Nummy,' the utter ignorance of the existence of any sadness in the whole world except what school discipline enforces, her fearless and open avowal of her romantic adoration for Jack Poyntz, make her a lovable thing. She is one big slice of sunshine, and she had no drunken father! It was a delight to act Naomi Tighe; she is as fresh as country butter, and every word she utters breathes the unladen atmosphere of a bright, green spot 'far from the madding crowd.'

Speaking of 'Nummy' reminds me of our early rehearsals of *School*. One morning, we were going through the scene where Lord Beaufoy, having found a tiny shoe which has slipped from Bella's foot as she ran away alarmed at a galloping bull, but which he carefully hides, asks the girls 'if they have lost anything?' They both reflect and look about, but cannot imagine what it can be, as nothing seems missing. This particular morning, so imbued and engrossed was I in the situation, that while wondering what I could have lost, I instinctively and in alarm suddenly put my hand to my chignon with a look of terror, and remained so for a second. This purely impulsive action so amused and impressed Tom Robertson that he begged me to do it at

night. I did so, and I shall never forget the burst of laughter and applause which greeted its effect. Needless to add, I repeated it every night until further notice, and the 'business' was written by Robertson in his book.

Cecilia Dunscombe in *M.P.* was a part I liked immensely, and I always felt sorry not to have had a chance of playing her again. She was written as a type of a 'girl of the period,' who, if not carefully handled might on the stage become offensive. There are many temptations in a part of this calibre to enlarge upon the eccentricities of a 'good fellow' sort of woman. I was careful to preserve all the points the author intended when he wrote the play; but I worked to make the audience like her, by giving an amusing, but, at the same time, a feminine rendering of her character. A leading critic was good enough to say of this performance: 'The perfect command of appropriate gesture and movement; the subtler play of feature; the power to indicate, in spite of an exterior of frivolity and mirth, a deeper and more earnest nature—these are things which on our stage are unhappily given but to the few.'

I thoroughly enjoyed the last act. Robertson always gave me a *carte blanche* to do what I liked with the parts he wrote for me, and often said 'he knew full well that he could trust to my good taste and discretion.' I think my instincts never misguided me. When poor Tom, who was then fading fast, saw *M.P.*, he said to me, 'I must write more parts for

you, Marie; it does me good, for I can see you as I put the words on paper!' He *never* wrote another. I have an affection for Cecilia Dunscombe, and one reason may be that this was the last part I ever created for the author, although he would often, during his sad illness, speak hopefully of the three plays he had made up his mind to write for us to succeed one another, which were to be called, in turn, *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*—'such good parts for you, Marie,' he would say. It made me wretched indeed to hear him talk in that way when I knew how fatal was his malady.

Mary Netley is not a good part to read in the book, and had not Tom Robertson asked me to 'build it up,' she would have fallen comparatively flat upon the audience. When he had finished reading the piece to us, he begged me to do all I could in the scene which concerned me in the last act, for somehow he felt unable to make Mary as prominent as he wished, so at the rehearsals I set to work, and invented business and dialogue, which, happily, met with his approval; he declared I greatly helped the act, which was not only improbable, but in parts very weak. The audience laughed at the fun, and forgave the rest. I must confess that I often felt a little ashamed of the expedients I was obliged to adopt, and was fully conscious that it was not art, only fun and frolic, where we pretended to be soldiers going through our exercises. The audience thoroughly enjoyed it, however; for although it

was improbable, it was harmless and amusing. I remember with what care I made the famous roley-poley pudding every night during the first run of *Ours*. This pudding was eagerly waited for by a little family of poor children—I made a very big one, and filled it with jam. *Ours* was, in spite of its weak points in the last act, a great favourite with the public, and never failed to be our good friend whenever we called upon it to help us, and so, as a true friend, it will be a treasure in 'my memory locked.'

Rosie Fanquehere in *Play* was a slenderly-written part, as, indeed, was the whole comedy, which depended greatly upon the acting, it being so slight in plot and incident, and the weakest in every sense, of Robertson's works. There was a pretty moment in the first act, where I had to describe my sensations when drowning; this was written in very simple, unaffected language: the speech never failed to touch me as I delivered it, and the audience also were often moved to tears. I had an effective scene in the ruins of the Alte Schloss with poor Montague, who played Frank Price charmingly. It was one of the prettiest of love-scenes. We sang a duet, partly in English, partly in German. I often look at a picture of the scene on a copy of the music, and note how good the likenesses must have been then. But the piece was too slender to endure a revival, so after the first run poor Rosie disappeared. This part is the last in my list because she was the

least attractive to me. But all the plays were my good friends, and I love them, and thank them. Good-bye, 'Nummy' (dear 'Nummy!'), Polly, Cecilia, Mary, and Rosie; I shall, while memory lasts, cherish and remember you with grateful thoughts. I kiss my hands to you all, my dear companions and playmates. In every beat of my heart there is a corner kept for you. Often, when I am alone, I think of you, and live again in the sweet and joyous words we spoke together. Good-bye, good-bye; as I write my farewell to you, every letter holds a tear.

RESUMED BY S. B. B.

An experience quite new to us was an afternoon performance of *Masks and Faces,* which we gave, after repeated requests, at the Crystal Palace. Notwithstanding the broiling July heat, the large theatre was packed in a remarkable way, and we and the play were received with enthusiasm. When it was over, the bulk of the audience, largely composed of ladies, walked round to the stage-door, and there formed a long lane, through which we were obliged to pass to get away. We hesitated for a time, but at last, in answer to the manager's earnest entreaties, gave way, and so made a sort of royal progress out of the building. Scores of ladies followed Mrs. Bancroft with the kindest demonstrations of more than good feeling, and she drove home laden with pretty baskets and bunches of flowers, deeply touched by the many sweet words that were spoken to her.

From the day that our farewell was announced, the booking-office was besieged by applications, made in every possible way, to secure seats for the last night of our management, and it became a very difficult matter to deal with them, as no building that I know anything about would have held the many thousands who honoured us with a wish to be present. On all important occasions the task of the management is very onerous in apportioning the seats, but for so special a night the difficulties were a hundred-fold increased. To accommodate as large a number as was possible, the ordinary capacious stall and balcony armchairs were taken away, and smaller ones placed in their stead. This, of course, made room for a great many. We had another difficulty to contend with in the efforts made to obtain admission, at almost any cost, by bribery, and only owing to the perfect loyalty of all concerned was it possible to secure our intention that every place in the theatre should be either sold at the ordinary charge or given away. This, so far as we were concerned, was accomplished, every single seat being disposed of direct from the theatre, and the vouchers only issued at the last moment, it being impossible for us to do more to prevent them being sold again, or to say what might have been paid for tickets that may have changed hands, as twenty guineas were freely offered for a corner in any part of the theatre by enthusiasts.

We were much honoured by the Prince of Wales

suggesting the date, in order that he might, with the Princess of Wales, be present; while the Prince and Princess Christian also signified their intention to occupy a private box.

Very great compliments were paid us by all 'sorts and conditions of men' in the personal letters we received wishing seats to be reserved, the following kind words from Lord Esher (then Sir William Brett) being among them:

'6, Ennismore Gardens,
*July* 14, 1885.

'My dear Mr. Bancroft,

'If Mrs. Bancroft and you will do us the great honour of allowing us to be present on Monday next, we shall be delighted to come to your most interesting evening. Lady Brett and myself have been for many years among the greatest of your admirers. We think that you and Mrs. Bancroft introduced a new life into English acting, which made it, at least, equal to French! I, for my part, have been, for more years than she would allow me to say very out-loud, a devoted admirer of the graceful sprightliness of your lady! If you can spare two places, and authorize me to obtain them, you will do us a great kindness.

'Believe me,
'Very faithfully yours,
'Wm. Baliol Brett,
'Master of the Rolls.'

The final programme was a subject of much thought.

Immediately on his return from America—I think in April—Irving had expressed his earnest wish to take part in it, either in acting or speaking an address, as we might think for the best, an offer we gratefully accepted, it being agreed that he should speak some appropriate lines which our old friend Clement Scott consented to write: and whose acknowledgment of our wish that he would do us this service came in these words: 'If this were not indeed a "labour of love," I should never put pen to paper any more, or cudgel my brains in any delightful cause again. I take it as an act of extreme friendship to endow me with this "office of love." This compliment to me shows that you two, who are about my oldest friends, recognise that I have some place in the revivalism that you instituted. My sole fear is that, with all my earnest endeavours, I shall not be able to do full justice to a theme that is so dear to my heart, or to express with adequate enthusiasm what I really feel.'

We decided that it would give a distinctive character to the event to limit those who acted on the occasion to the names of past and present members of our companies, of whom we have compiled the following interesting list, many among them having made their first appearances on the stage, or in London, under our management:

Mr. Addison,
Mr. F. Archer,
Mr. Barrymore,
Mr. Kyrle Bellew,
Mr. Alfred Bishop,
Mr. Blakeley,
Mr. E. H. Brooke,
Mr. C. Brookfield,
Mr. Lionel Brough,
Mr. Carne,
Mr. R. Cathcart,
Mr. Arthur Cecil,
Mr. John Clarke,
Mr. John Clayton,
Mr. Coghlan,
Mr. Collette,
Mr. H. B. Conway,
Mr. F. Cooper,
Mr. Dacre,
Mr. Stewart Dawson,
Mr. Denison,
Mr. F. Dewar,
Mr. E. Dyas,
Mr. Elliot,
Mr. Ellwood,
Mr. Everill,
Mr. Eversfield,
Mr. Fabert,
Mr. Flockton,
Mr. F. Glover,
Mr. Hare,
Mr. W. Herbert,
Mr. George Honey,
Mr. David James,
Mr. Kemble,
Mr. Kendal,
Mr. Markby,
Mr. E. Maurice,
Mr. H. J. Montague,
Mr. Montgomery,
Mr. Reginald Moore,
Mr. Odell,
Mr. Perceval-Clark,
Mr. Pinero,
Mr. J. W. Ray,
Mr. Lin Rayne,
Mr. Forbes Robertson,
Mr. Smedley,
Mr. Standing,
Mr. Sugden,
Mr. Teesdale,
Mr. Terriss,
Mr. H. Vaughan,
Mr. Vollaire,
Mr. Arthur Wood,
Mr. Chas. Wyndham,
Mr. F. Younge,
Mr. William Younge,
Miss Carlotta Addison,
Mrs. Bernard-Beere,
Miss Brennan,
Miss Fanny Brough,
Miss Buckstone,
Miss Calhoun,
Mrs. Canninge,
Miss Carlisle,
Miss Cavalier,
Miss Ada Cavendish,
Miss Maria Daly,
Miss Linda Dietz,
Miss Ada Dyas,
Miss Erskine,
Miss Lydia Foote,
Miss Gerard,
Miss B. Goodall,
Miss C. Grahame,
Miss Julia Gwynne,
Miss Henri,
Miss Hertz,
Miss Henrietta Hodson,
Miss Fanny Josephs,
Mrs. Kendal,
Mrs. Langtry,
Miss Larkin,
Miss Le Thiere,
Miss Litton,
Miss Rose Massey,
Miss Measor,
Miss Mellon,
Madame Modjeska,
Miss Louisa Moore,
Mrs. Gaston Murray,
Mrs. Leigh Murray,
Miss Kate Phillips,
Miss Kate Rorke,
Miss Amy Roselle,
Mrs. Saville,
Mrs. Stirling,
Miss Ellen Terry,
Miss Marion Terry,
Miss Lydia Thompson,
Miss Tilbury,
Mrs. Hermann Vezin,
Miss Victor,
Miss Florence Wade,
Miss Warden,
Miss Maud Williamson,
Miss Augusta Wilton,
Miss Blanche Wilton,
Mrs. John Wood,
Miss Sophie Young.

Needless to say, the following characteristic note was hailed with the heartiest of welcomes:

'Garrick Club,
*June* 9, 1885.

'My dear Bancroft,

'I need scarcely tell you what great pleasure it will give me to do something on the occasion of your retirement from management: play the audience in or out; as early as you choose, or as late; or even, on such an interesting evening, turn up the gas; go round with the apples, oranges, etc.; ring up the curtain; clear the stage, or anything! With all kind messages to your dear wife,

'Sincerely yours,
'J. L. Toole.'

I will not dwell in further detail on the great compliments paid us by those who took part in the entertainment, as a copy of the playbill will speak more eloquently than would any words of ours. We must, however, briefly allude to some of the many personal tributes which tended so largely to complete it. Several managers of leading theatres changed their programmes, or altered the hours of commencement, in order to be present, while other friends sacrificed some days of hard-earned holiday to remain purposely in England, or returned from the Continent to do us honour. 'We can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks!'

It was with great pleasure we received a large silver goblet, inscribed: 'A grateful remembrance from the working staff behind the scenes,' which was

presented, on behalf of the subscribers, in affectionate terms by Mr. Hastings, who had passed so many years under our management. We could not fail to be greatly interested at seeing all the contributors to the gift ranged in two groups upon the stage—those who had served us in both theatres being divided from the others who had been with us at the Haymarket only. We also exchanged souvenirs with all the members of our company. The gifts presented to us we shall ever highly prize.

There is not much more to tell. Very early on the eventful day earnest knots of people began to assemble round the doors leading to the unreserved seats, which we would not allow to be secured in advance. I have heard of the most enthusiastic among those present at Macready's farewell of the stage, when plays began much earlier than now, being at the pit entrance of Drury Lane by one o'clock; and when Charles Kean retired from the Princess's, I was myself in the crowd before four: but devoted indeed is the playgoer who thinks nothing nowadays of arriving with his camp-stool and sandwiches at ten a.m. to see a play begin quite ten hours later. Hour by hour the number swelled. It grew so large at last, and so utterly beyond all chance of more than a fraction of it ever fighting its way into the theatre, that the traffic had to be turned aside by the police, and sent, to the amazement of many occupants of cabs and other vehicles, by neighbouring thoroughfares.

The whole proceeding had a strange, magnetic effect upon me, and I watched it long and often. It would be wrong, however, to presume that our readers could share the sentiment; and without further trial to their patience, we will let a copy of the playbill say what was acted, and by whom.

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

Farewell programme on the occasion of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's Retirement from Management, Monday, July 20th, 1885.

Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales having graciously signified their intention to be present.

The selections from *Money* and *London Assurance* will be acted entirely by past members of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's companies, who have volunteered this compliment to their former managers.

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*At eight o'clock will be played*

THE FIRST ACT OF LORD LYTTON'S COMEDY,

## MONEY.

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| LORD GLOSSMORE | MR. ALFRED BISHOP. |
| SIR FREDERICK BLOUNT | MR. CHARLES WYNDHAM. |
| SIR JOHN VESEY | MR. COLLETTE. |
| CAPTAIN DUDLEY SMOOTH | MR. ARCHER. |
| MR. GRAVES | MR. ARTHUR CECIL. |
| MR. STOUT | MR. DAVID JAMES. |
| ALFRED EVELYN | MR. COGHLAN. |
| MR. SHARP | MR. BLAKELEY. |
| GROOM OF THE CHAMBERS | MR. SUGDEN. |
| BUTLER | MR. JOHN CLAYTON. |
| LADY FRANKLIN | MRS. STIRLING. |
| CLARA DOUGLAS | MISS ELLEN TERRY. |
| GEORGINA VESEY | MRS. LANGTRY. |
| MAIDSERVANT | MRS. JOHN WOOD. |

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A SCENE FROM DION BOUCICAULT'S COMEDY,

## LONDON ASSURANCE.

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| SIR HARCOURT COURTLY | MR. HARE. |
| CHARLES COURTLY | MR. TERRISS. |
| DAZZLE | MR. KENDAL. |

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| DOLLY SPANKER | MR. A. W. PINERO. |
| MAX HARKAWAY | MR. F. EVERILL. |
| SERVANT | MR. KYRLE BELLEW. |
| LADY GAY SPANKER | MRS. KENDAL. |
| GRACE HARKAWAY | MISS CARLOTTA ADDISON. |

Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, with members of their present company,

WILL PLAY THE SECOND AND THIRD ACTS OF

## MASKS AND FACES:

### AN ORIGINAL COMEDY,

*Written by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor.*

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| SIR CHARLES POMANDER | MR. FORBES-ROBERTSON. |
| ERNEST VANE | MR. BARRYMORE. |
| JAMES QUIN | MR. E. MAURICE. |
| COLLEY CIBBER | MR. C. BROOKFIELD. |
| MR. SOAPER | MR. ELLIOT. |
| MR. SNARL | MR. KEMBLE. |
| TRIPLET | MR. BANCROFT. |
| LYSIMACHUS | MISS KATE GRATTAN. |
| JAMES BURDOCK | MR. PERCEVAL-CLARK. |
| COLANDER | MR. C. EATON. |
| HUNDSDON | MR. YORK. |
| PEG WOFFINGTON | MRS. BANCROFT. |
| MABEL VANE | MISS CALHOUN. |
| KITTY CLIVE | MISS MAUD WILLIAMSON. |
| MRS. TRIPLET | MRS. CANNINGE. |
| ROXALANA | MISS MABEL GRATTAN. |

MR. HENRY IRVING will speak a few parting words, written in verse by Mr. Clement Scott; and MR. J. L. TOOLE will appear. MR. BANCROFT will bid farewell.

It would be a hopeless task to give a correct description of the audience, or a complete list of the well-known names of leading people in their varied walks of life who honoured us by their presence, for many celebrities, who had failed to obtain other seats, were hidden away in the upper circles. Suffice it to say that of diplomacy, politics, and society, most

distinguished representatives were present: as was equally the case with the army and sister service, the law, medicine, science, and the Church; while the Royal Academy sent us not only its accomplished President, but many others whose great names are household words; literature in every branch, and journalism in all aspects, seemed to bristle in the stalls, as was the case with music and the drama; indeed, a list of names would be but a brief epitome of 'Men of the Time.'

I have not the power to describe, as might be, the demeanour of this wonderful audience throughout the evening, and their cordial welcome of favourite after favourite. As the time approached for Mrs. Bancroft to go on the stage as Peg Woffington, I asked for a knife, and cut a hole in part of the scene, that I might see the effect of her appearance as well as hear her greeting. I borrowed an opera-glass for the purpose, and caught a hurried glimpse of several friends; I recollect being reminded, by the powerful face of Sir Henry Thompson, of a kind invitation to join one of his delightful 'octaves' in the first days of my emancipation. I also saw our dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Charles Skirrow; and, if I remember rightly, close to the stage was Mrs. Gabrielli, and, further away, Mrs. Quintin Twiss. Just before Mrs. Bancroft entered I caught sight of Lady Dorothy Nevill, looking, as usual, like a charming picture of one of her own ancestors; and of a face rarely seen at the play—that of Robert Browning.

The demonstration was very moving, and very extraordinary; while the warmth of my own reception, a few minutes later, I confess, bewildered me; it seemed like the sound and roar of many voices, but I could see nothing; and never do in playing parts like Triplet, in which it is impossible to wear any sort of eyeglasses. When the play was over I had to go hurriedly to my room to change my clothes and prepare for my final words, so, alas! I did not hear Irving speak Scott's ode, which I am told he delivered with infinite grace, as in the days of epilogues and prologues to the play: the ovation which greeted him only travelled to me, as later on I was conscious of the loud bursts of laughter which followed Toole's humorous but affectionate speech. I reached the wings in time to hear him express his concluding hope that the brief engagement of Irving and himself under our management, which was limited in fact to one night, would not be reported as having been the means of closing the theatre! I think I have told all that may have interest, for I must yield to Mrs. Bancroft a woman's privilege—the last word. Before that is uttered I will find space for Clement Scott's verses, and for the farewell words I did my best to speak.

A VALEDICTORY ODE.

A friend and neighbour from the busy Strand,
Warned by the summons of Fate's prompting Bell,
Has come to take two comrades by the hand,
And bid them both regretfully 'Farewell.'

Parting to lovers may be 'sorrow sweet,'
To friends all separation must give pain;
But time, consoling, turns the travelled feet,
And tells the parted—they may meet again.

No age or sickness saddens this adieu,
No piteous cause I plead, no alms I beg;
My toast is 'Triplet, here's long life to you,
And years more laughter to delightful Peg.'

The sailor sights at last his native land,
The swallow follows to accustomed nest;
So, two tried actors, toiling hand in hand,
Demand at last toil's after-blessing—Rest.

Their steady course was fann'd by favouring gales,
Their loyal purpose dimm'd by no regret;
Sponsors they stood to infant 'Prince of Wales,'
With life renewed the classic 'Haymarket.'

Not to all artists, earnest though their aim,
As retrospective vision there appears
The priceless gift of an untarnished name,
The blameless history of twenty years.

Fired by the flush of youth, they found a way
To give to fading art a healthy cure;
The stage they loved revived beneath their sway,
They made art earnest, and they kept it pure.

Shall we forget, at this their parting hour,
How fact and fancy intertwine and blend?
Saying, 'The Stage acknowledged them a power,
Actor and actress found in them a friend.'

'*Ars est celare artem*,' 'tis inscribed,
Crowning this stage, and fancifully wrought;
From great ones past this precept they imbibed,
This needful lesson dutifully taught.

Dramatic flowers they gathered by the way,
And chose the brightest wheresoe'er it grows;
Never disdaining to contrast in play
French tiger-lily with sweet English rose.

With kindly Robertson they formed a 'School,'
Rejoiced in 'Play' after long anxious hours;
'Caste' was for them, and theirs, a golden rule,
And thus by principle we made them 'Ours.'

Such an example in the after age
  Will throw a softening haze o'er bygone care;
We close the volume at its brightest page,
  But leave a blossom of remembrance there.

Good-bye, the cup of sympathy let's fill,
  We'll drink it deep ere sorrow's sun be set;
Together you have mounted life's long hill,
  And leave behind no record of regret.

Good-bye, old friends, it shall not be farewell;
  Love is of art the birth and after-growth;
'Heaven prosper you' shall be our only knell,
  Our parting prayer be this, 'God bless you both.'

When Toole had finished, and the audience was recovering from the effect of the amusement he had caused, the stage was strewn with the beautiful flowers that had been arriving throughout the evening for Mrs. Bancroft, and in their midst—full of the thought how serious the moment really was to us—I spoke these farewell words:

'May it please your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen,—For a long time now I have dreaded this moment, and have often wondered if, when it came, I should be able to speak to you at all. My best hope of doing so is in the remembrance that I have to offer, as well as my own thanks, the thanks of Mrs. Bancroft, whose life, from her early childhood, has been passed in the service of the public, for the many years of constant kindness shown to us, not only by this brilliant and representative audience, but by that great world of friends unknown, yet known so well—the public.

'We do not take this, to us, important step with-

out full reflection—we know how much, in resigning management, we give up, but release from the sordid side of life, which must have its share in every profession, makes some amends—while that which for so long a time has been our pride is also a great responsibility, and, believe me, we value your regard too highly to risk for a moment a fraction of its decay.

'We feel how far beyond our merits are the honours and compliments which have been showered upon us from every side, and I am deeply conscious of the poverty of my attempt to acknowledge them. Robbed now of the actor's art, I must ask you to clothe my words with all the eloquence and wealth of thanks I mean them to convey; but I almost think the sympathy between us at this moment is beyond words. If it has been my privilege to spare Mrs. Bancroft such labour and anxieties as should not be a woman's lot, how amply have I been a thousand-fold repaid! Most of us, I think, owe Mrs. Bancroft something, but I am by far the heaviest in her debt. I alone know how she has supported me in trouble, saved me from many errors, helped me to many victories; and it is she who has given to our work those finishing touches, those last strokes of genius, which, in all art, are priceless. And so, ladies and gentlemen, we worked together until we earned, very gradually, our proud possession—the confidence of the public. Whatever that work may be worth, it has been thorough and

honest, for neither of us have ever bought any man's favour. It would ill become me to talk of what we have tried to do, but should we be remembered as the humble pioneers of anything that may have advanced the art we love—if we should be thought, in some way, to have helped to make its position better than we found it, it would be a high distinction. No general can succeed without a staff and an army. In every branch our fellow-workers—from those distinguished authors and actors, those masters of the craft, whose names will spring at once to your memories, to the humblest members of our ranks, have been so loyal and so forbearing to us that we shall feel for ever in their debt. Indeed, it is but the simple truth to say that all we have earned of fame and fortune we owe to the calling we have followed, and it would be a poor return not to give it back the brightest feelings of our natures.

'Now that my words are, I hope, beyond the fear of misconstruction, I would like to acknowledge our obligations to that great power, the Press; which of late years, in my humble judgment, has done much to aid the actor and his art to reach the position they enjoy. It seems to me that at no time in the history of the Stage, when the managers have worked in a bold spirit and towards good ends, have the dramatic critics so quickly stood by their sides and marched with them on the road. Individually I owe much to the Press. I can truly say I never read an adverse opinion of my own work without thinking if it were

correct. I have generally had to admit that it was, and the result has been at least an earnest effort to lessen the faults that may have been found with me.

'I beg leave to offer, as managers, our heartfelt thanks to the gentlemen of the Press for their encouragement, so valuable to youth, of our earlier efforts, while we shall always remember the honour they have done us in judging our maturer work by the highest standard.

'Our thanks are not yet exhausted; how cordially are they due to those old comrades who have come here to-night to give us so strong a sign of their goodwill, joined by those valued friends, John Toole and Henry Irving. The distinction given to our retirement by such proofs of friendship, and by Mr. Irving's recital of Mr. Scott's generous poem, are, to us, beyond value. Let me ask them to believe that our remembrance of their kindness—like our remembrance of this scene—will never pass away.

'Ladies and gentlemen, I have detained you too long. I must not impose upon your generosity, to which I have no better claim than some devotion to hard work, although your goodness tempts me to say one thing of myself which may secure me that fragment of your remembrance I ask as my own. It is now more than twenty-four years since, as a lad of nineteen, I first tried to become an actor; during that time, averaging, I think, between ten and eleven months of every year, whenever my name has been

in a playbill I have appeared in answer to it, having never once failed, to the best of my strength, in my duty to the public. I cannot longer defer the pain I must give myself—to say how much we thank you is but little, to feel how much we thank you is a great deal. Whether as actors it may sometimes be our delight and our privilege to appear at intervals before you, I don't yet know; but as managers I have now, in my wife's name and my own, to bid you good-bye. We do so, ladies and gentlemen, with feelings of thankfulness, of great respect, and, if you will permit us to approach you so nearly, with feelings of deep affection.'

Mrs. Bancroft's pen shall tell what followed; I will only detain the reader with a few and varied extracts from many letters on the subject, and some words I spoke two evenings later as Chairman at the Banquet in aid of the Royal Theatrical Fund, when I succeeded in raising, naturally to my pride and gratification, a subscription list which passed all previous records, and amounted to £1,300.

What follows immediately needs no further introduction:

'DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

'I have observed your career from its beginning, and can bear testimony to the enormous improvement you have effected on the English stage.

'You were the first to teach the school of Nature,

and not only by your own bright impersonations, but also by your influence over all those with whom you were brought in contact, to prove that English Art is second to none.

'Following in your footsteps, and emulous of your achievements, many have attained fame and fortune. But it is my firm belief that to you, and to you especially, is to be attributed the great and successful development of our Modern Drama.

'Sincerely yours,

'ALGERNON BORTHWICK.'

'DEAR MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT,

'Are you too tired of being told how much everybody admires and loves you both? All I can say is, that I heartily wish I had been privileged to begin feeling twenty years ago what I feel now, and I shall make myself what amends are in my power by feeling as long as I live.

'All happiness to you, from yours, gratefully and affectionately ever,

'ROBERT BROWNING.'

'MY DEAR BANCROFT,

'You and your wife will be in receipt of numberless letters of admiration and sympathetic farewell. Let me and mine add *our* mite, and congratulate you both most warmly on the demonstration of last night.

'I myself am a pretty old playgoer, dating from "old Dowton"—whom I well knew on the "Kent

circuit" about 1840—the elder Farren, Mrs. Glover, etc., and in bygone days never missed any event of genuine interest. Among the most prominent of such occasions was the farewell of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, on Monday, August 29th, 1859. (I have my stall ticket still by me.) The *Times* spoke of it as "one of the most imposing ovations ever seen within the walls of a theatre," and it was; last evening was another, but there was this difference —the thoroughly representative character of last night's audience was *never*, in my experience, equalled. Therein shines the true public feeling, all up and down the ladder, towards you both, and on this Lady Monckton and myself so heartily and sympathetically congratulate you.

'With kindest wishes, I am,

'Your old friend,

'JOHN B. MONCKTON.'

'MY DEAR MRS. BANCROFT,

'Will you allow me to be one of the crowd who will assemble on the night of the 20th, to express their regret at your retirement from management, *for regret will be the general feeling?*

'My career was *ended* when yours *began.*

'With kindest regards to Mr. Bancroft and yourself,

'Believe me,

'Yours sincerely,

'MARY ANNE KEELEY.'

'My dear Friend,

'I congratulate you on the brilliant termination of an honourable career of management. How strange are the phases of life! Little did I think on the occasion of my first seeing you in Liverpool (when you acted in the *Woman in Mauve*) that I should see you in the exceptionally proud position you stood in last Monday; and still less that I should be classed amongst your friends, permitted to add my quota to the goodwill and admiration you were greeted with.

'My kindest regards and best wishes to you both, my dear Bancroft, and

'Believe me,

'Yours sincerely,

'Chas. Wyndham.'

'Dear Madam,

'How many of your most respectful admirers were unable to be present at your farewell last night you will never know; but many of us absent in body were yet present in spirit. You have helped the humble writer of this letter in so many ways, and not least in having cleared away the mists of prejudice and ignorance which a puritanical education had raised up.

'It has been by such good work as yours and your husband's that the Drama has risen to its proper position, and been ennobled even in the eyes of those brought up to despise and condemn it.

'Yours truly,

'A Lover of the Engadine.'

In spite of the heat and the lateness of the season, there was a wonderful gathering in the large hall of the Freemasons' Tavern on the evening of Wednesday, July 22nd; but I will not trouble the reader with any more lists of names. In proposing the toast of 'The Queen' I ventured to say:

'Duty and pleasure are rarely so happily combined as in the honour a chairman enjoys while proposing the "Health of Her Majesty." As an actor it will always be a personal regret with me that the privilege of appearing before the Queen has not fallen to my lot, but her Majesty ceased to go to the play in the year I went upon the stage.'

I also give an extract from the next Royal toast:

'It is a privilege and a distinction, which must be highly valued by an actor, to ask such a representative gathering as this to drink to the health of one who has in the most gracious way, and for many years, shown sympathy with, and interest in, the stage and its professors. I need not say I have the honour to allude to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. With, I hope, a full sense of my duty to the Prince of Wales, I venture to say that the sentiments with which his Royal Highness is regarded by those whom I at this moment represent are best expressed by the word affection.' The day following being fixed for the marriage of the Princess Beatrice, was an opportunity for some reference to her Royal Highness and her Majesty, which was warmly cheered: 'I cannot complete this toast without

alluding to the ceremony of to-morrow, and wishing the Princess Beatrice in her marriage the happiness so deserved by a life which has sweetly illustrated all that is beautiful in filial devotion.'

I must not refrain from mentioning that Mr. Sims Reeves, who not only did me the honour to offer his services, but wrote to tell me that he meant to sing 'The Death of Nelson' and 'The Bay of Biscay,' then fulfilled his promise in a way which roused the audience to extreme enthusiasm, to be even increased when the great singer responded with his exquisite rendering of 'My Pretty Jane.'

I was also under great obligations to my friends Edmund Yates, J. C. Parkinson, Arthur Pinero, Justin McCarthy, Comyns Carr, T. H. S. Escott, Charles Dickens, and John Hare for their eloquence on the occasion. I failed to persuade Barry Sullivan, who was present, to join the speakers, but he generously added fifty guineas to my subscription list, as did a warm-hearted friend, Warren William de la Rue.

In proposing the 'toast of the evening,' to which I had given a great deal of thought, I said:

'I shall beg you to join me in drinking to the continued prosperity of "The Royal General Theatrical Fund." While I feel deeply the compliment of being allowed to do so, I feel still more deeply the responsibility of venturing to follow in the wake of those distinguished men who have addressed you from this chair—men known through-

out the land by their genius, illustrious from their position and their rank, or esteemed for their talents and their culture by all the world. But dwarfed as I am by the great gifts of my predecessors, I will yield to none of them in my desire to serve, to the utmost of my power, the calling I have the honour to follow, and to which I owe so much.

'I will not attempt a detailed account of the work of this Fund—a very old friend of mine will best do that—Mr. Thomas Swinbourne, with whom I had the pleasure to act in 1861, the first year I was on the stage—indeed, I can remember well the agony I suffered while playing Osric—a part in which I could not make up my mind to wear an eyeglass, lest I should let the Prince of Denmark fall when I had to catch him—but here he is to bear witness that he made a swan-like end in my arms; and another old friend, my first manager, Mr. Mercer Simpson, is present to vouch for this having occurred in his theatre. And to these old friends I owe some of the earliest words of encouragement I ever received. Mr. Swinbourne will tell you of the Fund's good work better than I can, while I content myself with an appeal on broader lines, helped in the endeavour to stir your kind and charitable feelings by the thought that I am addressing many whom I have the honour to call my friends, and by the knowledge that you are all lovers of the drama. I will even venture to think of you for the moment as in the drama's debt, for is there anyone present who

does not owe something to the players? Have they not soothed for you many a care and lightened many a sorrow? I don't say this in any sense as an apologist; I can only ask for your help, confident in the hope that you regard the actor as a member of an onerous and responsible profession, for I hold the belief that the stage, like every other calling, as respect is shown to it, will so respect itself.

'It is not with the bright and glittering side of my art I have to deal to-night; not with those happy few who, having toiled long and steadily up the steepest of all roads—the road that bears the finger-post to fame—have snatched its prizes; though even with the mightiest actor let me remind you how fleeting is his renown, how far less lasting his hold upon posterity than that enjoyed by the followers of every other intellectual calling in the world. Brilliant as his triumphs are in the moments of success (and far be it from me to undervalue their delights), his work is not carved in marble—is not cut in stone—it lives not even upon canvas. When the last words of his part in the play are spoken, their tones—the speaker's looks—are buried by the remorseless curtain as it falls, and have but a lame existence in criticism and tradition. £70,000 may enrich our National Gallery with the magic art of Raphael, but ten times that sum could not buy for us one performance by David Garrick. The path the actor treads is laid but with sand, and his footmarks can in a moment be almost washed away, either by some sad calamity, as ill-health, or

by whatever wave may be the fashion of the hour, leaving only the "baseless fabric of a vision."

'But I am wandering from my proper purpose. My duty is a simple one, and, were I better able to discharge it, would be delightful to me. I have to appeal to you for aid, not for the improvident and undeserving, but for those who have for many years helped themselves, who have put something regularly away, by their subscriptions to this fund, towards the dull winters of lives passed in your service—old soldiers indeed who have well earned their pensions. The shining lights of the stage would burn less brightly were they not carefully tended by their valuable subordinates. Shylock could not act his grandest scene but for the humble aid of Tubal; while Sir Peter and Lady Teazle might have lived more happily together but for Mr. Snake.

'I fear I am speaking too long. Let me remember—

> '"My tongue within my lips I rein,
> For who talks much, must talk in vain."

'In conclusion, may I say this—and forgive me if my words take a personal tone. I don't appear as the advocate of a cause of which I know little or nothing. The brief which has been entrusted to me I hold, as it were, for my poorer brethren—for those who are old and perhaps forgotten. I am an actor pleading to you for actors, and I speak as one who has tasted the bitters as well as the sweets of his craft; as one who has seen in his life, from actors,

such deeds of self-denial, of single-heartedness, and of good-will, as it would not become me to dwell upon. Pope truly says—

> '"In faith and hope the world will disagree,
> But all mankind's concern is charity."

'I appeal to you on behalf of those who have been passed in the race and have fallen footsore by the wayside, but who are not less deserving than more fortunate followers of the beautiful art to which my best strength has been devoted, and in which my interest will be undying.'

The following letter, written by Mrs. Bancroft, and dated Thursday, July 23, 1885, happily exists to best describe a few more incidents, and will appropriately close the volume:

'We both deeply regretted that at the last moment you were prevented from being present at our *farewell!* Of course you have read the accounts, and the long leading articles in the newspapers; but no written description can give you an adequate idea of the whole scene from the rise of the curtain until its final fall, which closed, for ever, our career as managers. Many weeks before the, to us, memorable night arrived, I felt as though a heavy weight were tugging at my heart. Those two relentless words "good-bye" haunted me, wherever I went, whatever I did. They were the last visions in my mind when going to sleep, and

they rose up in big letters on my awaking. You will never know, and I can never explain to you, what a sad load it has been to carry in my thoughts. Was I not going to bid adieu to my dear public, my good faithful friends who helped me to launch the little ship with the three lucky plumes at its figure-head (have they not been lucky to me?), and who encouraged me on and on until I had completed twenty long voyages. Some of our friends have reproached us for throwing down the reins so soon; but we feel that we have done all we can for our art (if we stayed too long it might be forgotten *how much* we have done). We have achieved all we desire for ourselves, and we don't wish to linger so long upon the scene as to outlive, perhaps, the liking of the public. We have been successful beyond our wildest hopes, but not without very hard work, and now we lay down our arms that they may be taken up by others who are "eager for the fray."

'The beautiful theatre presented a striking appearance. The royal box was occupied by the Prince and Princess of Wales and the three young princesses; the box on the opposite side by the Prince and Princess Christian, with whom were Mr. and Mrs. Jeune. The stalls were taken away, and in their stead were small chairs—making the house look as closely packed as a box of figs or sardines. It almost seemed as if everybody of distinction was squeezed into the building, and it was with a feeling of real pride that I looked upon the assembly which

had come to do us so much honour. The great desire to be present was proof to us of high esteem and an acknowledgment of the good work we hope we have accomplished. It was, indeed, a moment to live for, to labour for. The theatre looked so gay and bright, like one huge bouquet set with brilliants. There was no feeling, I am sure, amongst that wonderful audience but of goodwill, and the hearts of all seemed to throb with one big beat, and that was for us.

'How I managed to dress for my part, I know not. I can only remember floral offerings of every conceivable design being brought to me, until there were so many that they had to be taken to a larger room. When I walked on to the stage in the second act of *Masks and Faces*, amongst Ernest Vane's other guests, my reception was so overpowering, and the "Good-bye" in my throat so big, that I nearly gave way. Some one (I think it was Mr. Barrymore) whispered to me "Bear up," and that brought me to myself. You know how nervous and sensitive I am, but I gathered up all the strength at my command, and conquered the almost uncontrollable desire to cry. During the last act, when you know poor "Peg" is sorely tried, and has so many different emotions to portray, it was with the greatest difficulty I managed to keep up until the end. But when the moment came to speak that beautiful "farewell" to Mabel Vane, every word seemed so appropriate, fitting in so strangely to the occasion, that I could

fight against my emotions no longer; the tears that had been waiting for the gates to open came freely to my eyes, and I fairly broke down. Mr. Irving delivered the "Good-bye" address with deep feeling; and dear little Toole, in his own quaint fashion, spoke of us both with affection.

'After this came Mr. Bancroft's "Farewell." How he got through it as he did is a marvel to me, for he was painfully agitated. The stage was beautifully decorated with masses of flowers by several ladies, who kindly offered to do the duty, and a path was formed right down to the foot-lights, with a border of bouquets on each side, through which we both walked when we went on to make our final bow. The curtain was raised many times, and the sight of the upstanding audience cheering and waving their handkerchiefs was something to remember. The sound of their voices, the enthusiasm, the deafening applause, and "Auld Lang Syne" played by the band, was all so bewildering to my senses, that I felt dazed and as in a dream.

'When all this was over, the Princess of Wales sent for me, and after gracious words of sympathy, presented me with the bouquet which she was carrying. You may imagine how deeply all this affected me. Many dear friends came round to speak pleasant words to me afterwards, and I was urged to go to a party given by Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, to which he had kindly invited us. I was advised

that it would put my thoughts for a time into another groove, and would help me to a better night's rest than if I went immediately home after the tension and excitement I had gone through. We remained in the theatre some time before starting, but the crowd which had assembled in order to see us leave, completely blocking the whole of Suffolk Street, still waited, and as we passed through to the carriage, those who were near enough pressed forward to shake hands with us, while expressions of regret and good wishes were called out to us on every side. As the carriage went slowly through the crowd, hands were thrust in, and grasping mine, the people shouted, "It mustn't be good-bye!" "Don't go away!" "Stay with your friends!"

'At Mr. de Rothschild's beautiful house we again met the Prince of Wales, who talked with us for a long time in the most flattering way. We saw many people who had been at the theatre, Lord Granville being particularly kind in echoing remarks contained in a letter he wrote a few days ago. When at last we reached home, I threw on a dressing-gown, and had a long think and a good cry. After all the noise, excitement, and suppressed emotion, having been, as it were, "the observed of all observers," I sat alone in the silence of the night reflecting, looking back through that long vista of the past, with its hard work, many triumphs, and bold achievements. I thought of my early struggles in childhood and girlhood—which made the water very

rough for me to wade—but now that I am safely landed, I cannot help looking sadly back upon the stormy sea through which I had to pass. My sleep that night was fitful, as you may well believe, and in the morning when I tried to speak I found that my voice had left me; the vocal cord had collapsed, and the reaction was almost as bad as the nervous agitation which had caused it.

'I have received many charming letters, amongst them being one from Lady Salisbury, and another from Lady Iddesleigh—letters that I shall treasure very much; in the future I shall read them many a time, and picture in my memory that eventful night.

'Well, the bouquets were so numerous that they had to be sent home on the following day in a van, and when they arrived they could not all be accommodated inside the house, so they were placed in the balcony, which soon was filled. When the van arrived, a small crowd of people soon collected, and the remarks from some of them, which were afterwards repeated to me, were most amusing. "What's all this mean?" said one. "It's either a weddin' or a funeral," was the reply. "Who lives here?" "Oh! *I* know why: it's the Bancrofts' 'ouse; they've jist 'ad a heap of money left them by a relation wot insists on their leavin' the stage!". "Oh, then all this is for a party!" "It's more like a royal mausoleum!"

'The lovely flowers are fading fast, and yesterday I found that one of the huge offerings had been sent to me in a handsome silver bowl.

'I am now counting the hours to our start for my dear Engadine; there I shall find the rest which I need this time more than ever. I feel so tired, so sleepy, that when I get to Pontresina I shall lie down, look at my old friends the mountains, which divide me from the hurly-burly through which I have passed on the other side of them, and not wish to get up again for days. Good-bye—no, no! *au revoir* to you, dear. Think of me this time next week, when I would not change places with you, much as I like you.'

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## L'ENVOI.

We now put down the pen. Our work is done, and we have achieved the ambition of accomplishing the task ourselves. In the last words of Margaret Woffington, we say to our readers: 'Good-bye. When hereafter you hear harsh sentence passed on us—whose lot was admiration, rarely love; triumph, but seldom tranquillity—think sometimes of us and say, Stage *Masks* may cover honest *Faces*, and hearts beat true beneath a tinselled robe.'

# INDEX.


*A Happy Pair*, morning performance of, 30
*A Lesson*, Burnand's version of *Lolotte*, 250; production of—the cast, 275; revival of, 354
*An Unequal Match*, by Tom Taylor, 98; produced—the cast, 116
Actors' Benevolent Fund, the, foundation of, 291; some personal remarks by Mr. Bancroft, 291-294
Albery, James, commissioned to adapt *Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*, 165; produced as *Duty*, 187
Anderson, James, on Mrs. Bancroft's part in *The Vicarage*, 96
Archer, Mr. William, his opinion of Mr. Bancroft's Triplet, 402

Ball, Meredith, and the Bancroft doubles, 7; success of his Woffington Gavotte, 57; goes to the Lyceum, 251; a long-continued practical joke with him, 251-255
Bancroft, Mr. and Mrs.:
An odd story, 3; *School for Scandal* withdrawn, 9; we lose John Hare, *ibid.*; *Sweethearts*, 10; letter from Mrs. Charles Kean on Mrs. Bancroft's Jenny Northcott, 11; death of Tom Hood, 12; Mrs. Bancroft's recollections of, *ibid.*; royal visitors, 14; preparations for the *Merchant of Venice*, *ibid.*; letter from Miss Ellen Terry, *ibid.*; Dr. Johnson on the divisions of the play, 15; the scenes, dresses, etc., 16-18; an amusing incident—Mrs. Bancroft and the nigger, 18, *et seq.*; *Sweethearts* and *Society* withdrawn, 20; the *Merchant of Venice* produced—the cast, 21; a failure to be proud of, 22; the Keans and Macready on Shylock, 23, 24; letter from G. A. Sala, 25; *Money* in rehearsal again, and the *Merchant* withdrawn, 26; a digression—the *première* of *Our Boys* and Signor Salvini, 27; letter from Salvini, 29; magical change caused by the reproduction of *Money*, 30; a morning performance with a small programme, *ibid.*; holiday abroad, 31; a 'vanishing' box, 32; the snorer, 33; the Duke of Connaught, 34; a mountain storm, 35; a sad story, 36; *Masks and Faces* in preparation, 39; changes in structure and treatment, 40; its production—the cast, 42; Benjamin Webster and Mr. Bancroft's Triplet, 43; autograph letter of Margaret Woffington's, 44; Mrs. Bancroft on the character, 46; her conversion of Charles Reade to her view, 52; note on the reality of emotion on the stage, *ibid.*; Charles Reade's criticism on the acting, 53; letters from Sir William Fergusson and George Vandenhoff, 55, 56; commission to H. J. Byron to write a new comedy, 57; *Wrinkles*, 58; failure foreseen, *ibid.*; commission to Tom Taylor for adaptation of *Les Pattes de Mouche*, *ibid.*; *Wrinkles* produced—the cast 60; a failure, 61; revival of *Ours*, *q.v.*; the cast, 62; commission Stephenson and Clement Scott to produce adaptation of *Nos Intimes*, 63; illness of Mrs. Bancroft and of Miss Ellen Terry, 64; H. J. Montague and Henry Irving, 65; *Peril* in rehearsal, *ibid.*; holiday at Kaltbad, *ibid.*; a practical joke, *ibid.*; Palgrave Simpson and the peasant child, 66; anecdote of Sir Julius Benedict, 67; holiday travels, 69-72; redecorating and re

furnishing, 73; production of *Peril*—the cast, 74; theatrical banquet at the Mansion House—the chief guests, 76; tribute to T. W. Robertson at, 77; a seaside holiday, 78; a veritable Mrs. Malaprop, *ibid.*; real and sham poverty, 80-84; first series of *matinées*, 84; death of Mrs. Montagu Williams, 85; journey to Paris to see Sardou's *Dora*, 86; a bargain, 87; John Parry's farewell, *ibid.*; Mrs. Bancroft's first public reading, 88; complimentary benefit to Henry Compton, *ibid.*; Benjamin Webster at, 90; letter from him on *London Assurance*, 91; Boucicault's sanction, 92; production of *The Vicarage* and *London Assurance*—the casts, 93; Mrs. Bancroft's part in *The Vicarage*, 96; letter from James Anderson, *ibid.*; first meeting with Mrs. Langtry, 97; *An Unequal Match* in rehearsal, 98; a 'Dramatic Contrast,' by Mrs. Bancroft, 99; the Engadine, 103; blocked at Gossensass, 105; Innsbruck and Salzburg, 108; on to Paris, 109; the salt-mines of Berchtesgaden, *ibid.*; first appearance of Mr. Bancroft's name on the playbills as lessee and manager, 112; some applications for engagements, 113-116; *An Unequal Match* produced—the cast, 116; souvenir and letter from Jefferson, 117, 118; his temperament and acting, 118, 119; finding a name for *Dora*, 120; *Diplomacy* decided on, 121; Mr. Ollier's offer, 122; Cecil's indecision, 124; Edmund Yates's verses on 'A *Première* at the Prince of Wales's,' *ibid.*; *Diplomacy* produced—the cast, 127; a triumph, *ibid.*; letter from Sardou, 128; the *Saturday Review*, Wilkie Collins and Clement Scott on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's Orloff and Countess Zicka, 129-132; a penalty of success—Burnand's *Diplunacy*, 133; autograph letter from Fanny Kemble, 135; benefit performances of *Society* and *The Green Bushes* for John Clarke and Mrs. Mellon, 135, 136; death of Charles Mathews, 136; Pierre Berton, 137; letter from, 138; Mr. and Mrs. Kendal take *Diplomacy* into the provinces, *ibid.*; off to the mountains again, 139; Jenny Lind's anecdote of the stammering tenor, 140; Jenny Lind and the doctor, 142; letter from, 143; Sir Paul Hunter's adventure, 144; Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice and Charles Wyndham, 145; death of Harry Montague, *ibid.*; Paris, 146; Toole in disguise, 147; introduction to Sardou, 148; a practical joke—members of the royal family, 150; back to England, 151; death of Phelps and Wigan, 152; reproduction of *Caste*, 156; letter to the *Times* on the production of plays by English authors, 157; death of John Clarke, 159; Sir Morell Mackenzie, 163; 'Celebrities at Home' in the *World*, 165; Count Gleichen and Prince Leiningen, 170; George Gordon goes to Australia — William Harford, his partner, succeeds him, 171; illness of George Honey, *ibid.*; a light summer programme, 174; the Comédie Française company at the Gaiety, 175; preparing for removal, 176; holiday notes by Mrs. Bancroft, 179-186; *Duty* (*Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*) produced, 187; the cast, 188; reconstructing the Haymarket, 188, *et seq.*; second visit to Sardou, 190; death of Buckstone, 191; farewell revival of *Ours* at the Prince of Wales's, 193; letters from Boucicault and Lester Wallack, 194, 195; farewell words, 200-202; production of *Money* at the Haymarket, 202; the Pit Question, 203-211; letters on the new arrangement, 212, 213; visit from the Prince of Wales, 213; Irving's supper-party at the Lyceum, 214; Sardou's new play, *Daniel Rochat*, a failure, 215; new version, by Burnand, of *Le Mari à la Campagne*, 215, 216; Count Gleichen's busts exhibited at the Royal Academy and presented to the Garrick Club, 216; Mr. Bancroft sits to Pellegrini ('Ape') for a portrait, *ibid.*; *Money* withdrawn and *School* substituted, 217; the cast, 218; Madame Modjeska, 219; note from Irving, *ibid.*; request from him to act Château Renaud in the *Corsican Brothers*, 220; visit from Sothern, *ibid.*; deaths of George Honey, J. R. Planché and Tom Taylor, 221; Coquelin sees *School*, 221; note from, and impressions in *La Vie Humoristique*, 222; the Haymarket

sublet, 223; Burnand reads first two acts of his new comedy, 224; brilliant close of the season, 224; off to the Engadine, 224; Mrs. Bancroft nurses the young Prince Christian, 225; back to London, 228; Burnand's third act, *ibid.*; Malvern, *ibid.*; letter from Arthur Cecil, 229; the 'Windsor Strollers,' 231; *School* and *The Vicarage* resumed, 233; an accident, *ibid.*; a 'quiet' horse, 236; *The Colonel* relegated to the Prince of Wales's, 237; 'Black Tuesday' (1881)—the terrible weather and the audience, 238-240; death of Sothern, 241; his opinion of Mrs. Bancroft as an actress, 242; *Masks and Faces* revived—the cast, 243; Triplet and Colley Cibber alternated, 243; Mr. Bancroft on his Triplet, 244; Mr. Gladstone at the Haymarket, 245; an amusing incident, 246; *Society* and *Good for Nothing* again, 248; letter from Ludwig Barnay, of the Meiningen Company, 249; preparing for the next season, 250; English rights of *Lolotte* purchased, *ibid.*; Meredith Ball goes to the Lyceum, 251; a long-continued practical joke, 251-255; at Pontresina again, 255; the charm of the Lake of Como, 257; Mr. Bancroft visits the East, and picks up suggestions for the *Overland Route*, 259-270; he goes to Paris, 270; and buys the English rights of *Odette*, 272; production of *Plot and Passion* and *A Lesson*, 275; warring elements—letter from Burnand, 276; Mrs. Langtry's entry on a professional career at the Haymarket, 277; her appearance in *She Stoops to Conquer*, 278; engagement with her, 282; reproduction of *Ours*, 283; morning performance of *She Stoops to Conquer*, *ibid.*; dinner by the Prince of Wales to leading London actors, 284; death of the Dowager Countess of Essex ('Kitty Stephens'), 285; adaptation of *Odette* entrusted to Clement Scott, *ibid.*; its difficulties, 286; incident during its production at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, 287; its production and cast, 289; an 'aggravating' success, 290; foundation of the Actors' Benevolent Fund—some personal remarks by Mr. Bancroft, 291-294; letter from Dion Boucicault on 'self-effacement,' 294; death of Benjamin Webster, 296; friendly note from Irving, 297; addition of Mrs. John Wood and Mr. David James to the company, and secession of Arthur Cecil, *ibid.*; friendly note from him, 298; farewell letter from William Winter, 299; at rest in the Engadine again, *ibid.*; a practical joke, 303; funeral note on a cat, 305; Lord Wolseley's thanks for Mrs. Bancroft's lines on Tel-el-Kebir, 307; the *Overland Route* produced—the cast, 309; *Nearly Seven*, *ibid.*; Mr. Bancroft goes to Paris to see Sardou's *Fedora*, 311; purchases English rights, 313; Christmas holiday at Eastbourne, *ibid.*; story by Edmund Yates, 314; death of Miss Kelly, *ibid.*; an eccentric old lady, 315; reproduction of *Caste*, 319; *Fedora* entrusted to Herman Merivale, 320; Mrs. Bernard-Beere and Mr. Coghlan engaged, 321; souvenir of *Caste* from Linley Sambourne, *ibid.*; Hare reappears as 'Sam Gerridge' for the last night of *Caste*, 322; a recollection of Mrs. Bancroft's, 323; last performances of *School*, 325; death of Mr. Charles Walter, 326; evil prognostications about *Fedora*, *ibid.*; its production—the cast, 330; its wonderful success, 331; a change of residence, 331; banquet to Henry Irving at St. James's Hall, 332; an unpremeditated feat, *ibid.*; Mr. Bancroft's farewell supper to Irving at the Garrick Club, 333; list of the company, 334; speech by Mr. Bancroft, 335; Hare proposes Mr. Bancroft's health, 337; Irving's return, 339; holiday at Homburg, 340; death of Dutton Cook, 342; Mr. Bancroft takes Loris Ipanoff in *Fedora*, 344; a story of his eye-glass, 345; letter from Mrs. Langtry, 347; the groundwork of Mr. Pinero's *Lords and Commons*, 348; its production—the cast, 350; Mrs. Stirling's brave endurance, 351; resolution to retire from management, 353; revival of *Peril* and *A Lesson*—the casts, 354; Mr. Bancroft sits to Mr. Ouless, R.A., for a portrait, 354; deaths of the Duke of Albany, Charles Reade and Henry J. Byron,

355; anecdotes of the latter, 356-363; production of *The Rivals*, 364-366; the cast, 366; in the Engadine, 369-378; at Brighton, 378; Baron Huddleston's story of a notorious forger, 379-381; The Grange at Ascot: a joke on the band boys, 382-384; reflections on the coming retirement, and letters from many friends, 384-391; announcement of the Farewell Season, 393; 'interviewed' on the subject, *ibid.*; the high salary question, 394; reasons for retiring, 396; revival of *Diplomacy*, 397; the cast, 398; a demonstration, *ibid.*; narrow escape from a fire, 400; Mr. Bancroft proposes Mr. Hare's health at the Dramatic and Musical Sick Fund banquet, *ibid.*; *Masks and Faces*, 401; the critics and their work, 403; *Ours* reproduced, 404; the cast, 405; a 'scratch bill'—*Katharine and Petruchio*, *Sweethearts*, and *Good for Nothing*, *ibid.*; rumours and inferences—a popular error controverted, 406; synopsis of plays produced and account of their ratio of success, 408-410; Mrs. Bancroft's preference for her Robertsonian parts, 411-417; afternoon performance of *Masks and Faces* at the Crystal Palace—an enthusiastic audience, 417; applications for seats for the last night, 418; letter from Sir W. B. Brett (Lord Esher), 419; list of members of the company, 421; compliments and presentations, 422; the crowd at the doors, 423; programme of the farewell night, 424, 425; the audience, 425; Toole's speech, 427; Clement Scott's 'Valedictory Ode,' spoken by Henry Irving, 427; Mr. Bancroft's farewell speech, 429-433; letters from Sir A. Borthwick, Mr. Robert Browning, Sir John Monckton, Mrs. Keeley, Mr. C. Wyndham, and 'A Lover of the Engadine,' 433-436; Mr. Bancroft's speeches as chairman at the Royal General Theatrical Fund banquet at the Freemasons' Tavern, 437-442; letter from Mrs. Bancroft on the farewell, 442-448; L'envoi, 448.

Barnay, Ludwig, of the Meiningen Company, 248; his opinion of *Society* and *Good for Nothing*, 249

Barnby, Mr., as Sergeant Bouncer, 183

Barrymore, Mr., joins the company, 397

Bernard-Beere, Mrs., 321, 327, 331, 365, 397

Bellew, Kyrle, his first appearance, 61

Benedict, Sir Julius, anecdote of, 67

Bernhardt, Madame Sarah, meeting with, 175

Berton, Pierre, *jeune premier* of the Paris Vaudeville, 137; letter from, 138; introduces Mr. Bancroft to Sardou, 148

Bird, Dr. George, 173, 209

Booth, Edwin, at the Lyceum, 248

Borthwick, Sir Algernon, letter from, 433

Boucicault, Dion, sanctions production of *London Assurance*, 92; letters from, 194, 294

Brookfield, Charles, sketches the two Triplets, 243; in *Odette*, 286; his monologue, *Nearly Seven*, 309; his remarkable 'make-up' in *Lords and Commons*, 352

Browning, Mr. Robert, letter from, 434

Bruce, Mr. Edgar, becomes tenant of the Prince of Wales's, 200

Buckstone's comic drama, *Good for Nothing*, produced, 175; his death, 191; proceeds of first performance at the Haymarket given to his widow, 202

Burnand, F. C., sees *Diplomacy* and writes *Diplunacy* straight off, 133; consulted about a new version of *Le Mari à la Campagne*, 216; reads first and second acts, 224; the third act, 228; *The Colonel* relegated to the Prince of Wales's, 237; his one-act version of *Lolotte* (*A Lesson*) produced—the cast, 275; letter from on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 385

Byron, H. J., a new play declined, 57; commissioned to write a new comedy, *ibid.*; *Wrinkles*, 58; produced—the cast, 60; a flat failure, 61; the author's contrition, *ibid.*; his death, 355; anecdotes of, 356-363

Calhoun, Miss, 340

*Caste*, revival resolved on, 151; reproduction of—the cast, 156; illness of George Honey in, 171; again produced—the cast, 319; last night of, 322

Cecil, Arthur, a Swiss holiday, 69; joins the company, 74; acts in *The Vicarage* and *London Assurance*, 93,

94; *To Parents and Guardians*, 117; his indecision, 124; as Baron Stein, 156; at Pontresina, 183; *der erste Komicer*, 186; letter from, 229; Santa Lucia, 255; leaves the company, 297; friendly letter from him, 298
Celeste, Madame, her last appearance in *The Green Bushes*, 136
Christian, Prince and Princess, in the Engadine, 224; Mrs. Bancroft nurses the young Prince, 225
Claretie, Jules, director of the Théâtre Français, on Sardou, 149
Clarke, John, benefit performance of *Society* for, 135; death of, 159; his love of praise, 160
Coghlan as Shylock—our fears, 21; difficulty of the character, 23; Charles Kean's version, *ibid.*; Macready and the part, 24; refuses to take part in *Wrinkles*, 58; decides to go to America, 64; re-engagement of, 321; decides to return to America, 340; farewell programme, 424
Collins, Wilkie, engaged on stage version of the *Moonstone*, 59; the piece considered too melodramatic for the Prince of Wales's, 63; on Mr. Bancroft's Orloff in *Diplomacy*, 130; letter from on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 385
*Colonel, The*, 237
Compton, Edward, first appearance of in London at his father's complimentary benefit, 89
Compton, Henry, complimentary benefit to, 88
Connaught, the Duke of, meeting with on board a steamer, 34
Conway, H. B., engaged for *Diplomacy*, 139
Cook, Dutton, on the arrangement of the incidents of the *Merchant of Venice*, 17; his death, 342
Coquelins, The, see *School*, 221; their impressions in *La Vie Humoristique*, 222
Critchett, Mr., the oculist, great kindliness of, 163

*Daniel Rochat*, new play by Sardou, disappointment at, 215
*Diplomacy*, Stephenson and Scott's version of Sardou's *Dora*, 121; produced—the cast, 127; a triumph, *ibid.*; in the provinces, 138; changes in the cast, *ibid.*; in America, 145; other changes in the cast, 156; withdrawn, *ibid.*; revival of, 397; the cast, 398
*Diplunacy*, Burnand's parody of *Diplomacy*, produced at one sitting, 133
*Dora*, new play by Sardou, 85; Mr. Bancroft goes to Paris to see it played, 86; a bargain, 87; handed over to Stephenson and Scott, *ibid.*; difficulties in finding a name, 120; *Diplomacy* decided in a 'draw,' 121
*Duty*, Albery's adaptation of *Les Bourgeois de Pont Arcy*, produced, 187; the cast, 188; withdrawn, 193

Essex, Dowager Countess of ('Kitty Stephens'), death of, 285

Fechter's death, 181
*Fedora*, by Sardou, 311; English rights purchased, 313; entrusted to Herman Merivale, 320; evil prognostications of the play, 326; its production—the cast, 330; its wonderful success, 331
Fergusson, Sir William, letter from on *Masks and Faces*, 55; his skill and patience, 162
Fitzmaurice, Lord Edmond, friendship with, 145

Gardiner, Mr. Dundas, 256
Gilbert, W. S., his *Sweethearts*, 8; morning performance of, 30; his reading of *Gretchen*, 155; *Sweethearts* reproduced, 175; letter from on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 386
Gleichen, Count, accepts commission for busts of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, 170; the works exhibited at the Royal Academy and presented to the Garrick Club, 216
*Good for Nothing*, comic drama by Buckstone, produced, 175; renewed performances, 248; acted at Pontresina, 256; forms part of a 'scratch bill,' 405
Gordon, George, his paintings of Venice, 18; leaves for Australia, 171
Grain, Corney, 88
*Green Bushes, The*, Madame Celeste's last appearance in, 136
Grossmith, George, 88
Gruneisen, Mr. C. L., of opinion *Dora* could not be made successful, 98

Hare, John, leaves the Prince of Wales's company, 9; produces ver-

sion of *Les Pattes de Mouche*, 59; appears in benefit performance of *Society* for John Clarke, 136; reappears at Haymarket for last night of *Caste*, 322; proposes Mr. Bancroft's health at the farewell supper to Henry Irving, 327; letter from on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 386; Mr. Bancroft proposes his health at the Dramatic and Musical Sick Fund banquet, 400
Harford, William, Gordon's partner, succeeds him as principal scene-painter, 171
Haymarket Theatre, the, purchase of the lease of, 179; reconstruction of, 188, *et seq.*; first performance at, 202; farewell to, 429
Hayward, Abraham, agrees to write criticism for *Times* of Mrs. Langtry's appearance at the Haymarket in *She Stoops to Conquer*, 278; the notice, 279-281
*Heads or Tails*, comedietta by Palgrave Simpson, produced, 174
Hollingshead, Mr., gives Mrs. Bancroft a lesson in step-dancing, 232
Honey, George, illness of while playing Eccles, 171; death of, 221
Hood, Tom, death of, 12; Mrs. Bancroft's recollections, *ibid.*; an additional verse to 'Precocious Piggy,' 14
Houghton, Lord, his speech at Irving's supper at the Lyceum, 214
Huddleston, Baron, his story of a notorious forger, 379-381; visit to, at Ascot, 382-384
Hunter, Sir Paul, his adventure in the Engadine, 144

Irving, Henry, meeting with, 65; good wishes, 202; gives supper at the Lyceum to celebrate the hundredth performance of the *Merchant of Venice*, 214; note from, 219; requests Mr. Bancroft to act in his intended production of the *Corsican Brothers*, 220; in *Othello* with Booth, 248; friendly note from, 297; banquet to at St. James's Hall, 332; farewell supper to by Mr. Bancroft at the Garrick Club, 333; list of the company, 334; his visit to Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft on his return, 339; speaks Clement Scott's 'Valedictory Ode,' 427

James, Mr., close of his connection as business manager, 64
James, Mr. David, joins the company, 297; his Eccles, 320
Jefferson, Joseph, meetings with, 98; presents a souvenir, 117; his temperament and his acting, 118, 119
Johnson, Dr., his opinion on the divisions of the *Merchant of Venice*, 15

*Katharine and Petruchio*, at the Haymarket, 405
Kean, Charles, and his father in the character of Shylock, 23, 24
Kean, Mrs. Charles, on Mrs. Bancroft as Jenny Northcott in *Sweethearts*, 11
Keeley, Mrs., letter from, 435
Kelly, Miss, once famous actress, death of, 314
Kemble, Fanny, autograph letter from, 135
Kemble, Henry, joins the company, 74, as Master Waddilove, 117; acts in *Diplomacy*, 156; plays Eccles, 174
Kendal, Mr. and Mrs., they join the company, 59 and 74; in Paris with Mr. Bancroft, 86; first night of *London Assurance*, 94, 95; in *Diplomacy*, 127; the burlesque at the Strand, 134; take *Diplomacy* into the provinces, 138; farewell programme, 424

*La Vie Humoristique*, the Coquelins' impressions of *School* in, 272
Labouchere, Mr. H., M.P., at Cadenabbia, 302
Labouchere, Mrs., and Mrs. Langtry, 277
Langtry, Mrs., first meeting with, 97; her determination to go upon the stage, 277; her appearance in *She Stoops to Conquer*, 278; the *Times* notice, 279-281; engaged for the Haymarket, 282; letter from to Mr. Bancroft, 347
Leiningen, Prince, and Mrs. Bancroft's 'serious' look, 170
*Le Mari à la Campagne* thoughts of a new version of, 215
*Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*, by Sardou, placed in Mr. Albery's hands for adaptation, 165; produced as *Duty*, 187
*Les Pattes de Mouche*, commission to Tom Taylor to adapt, 58
Lewes, G. H., on Salvini's acting in the death-scene in *Hamlet*, 29

Lewis, Mrs. George, 182
Lind, Jenny (Madame Goldschmidt), anecdote of a stammering tenor, 140; letter from, 143
*Lolotte*, foundation of Burnand's one-act comedy *A Lesson*, English rights bought, 250
Londesborough, Lord, letter from on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 387
*London Assurance*, Benjamin Webster and, 91; Boucicault's sanction, 92; production and cast of, 93; part of programme on farewell night, 424
*Lords and Commons*, by Mr. Pinero, the groundwork of, 348; its production—the cast, 350

Mackenzie, Sir Morell, his great kindliness, 163
Macready and the character of Shylock, 24
Mansion House, theatrical banquet at, 76; the chief guests, *ibid.*
*Masks and Faces* in preparation, 39; changes in, 40; its production—the cast, 42; withdrawn, 59; revival of—the cast, 243; morning performance at the Crystal Palace, 417; part of programme of farewell night, 425
Mathews, Charles, his opinion of *Our Boys*, 28; his death, 136
Mellon, Mrs. Alfred, benefit performance for, 135
Mellon, Miss, first appearance of, on the stage in *School* at the Haymarket, 218
*Merchant of Venice*, preparations for, 14; Dr. Johnson on the divisions of the, 15; night rehearsals, 20; production of—the cast, 21; unsuccessful, 22; withdrawn, 26
Merivale, Mr. Herman, Sardou's play *Fedora* entrusted to, 320
Modjeska, in *Heartsease* at the Court Theatre, 219; engaged for *Odette*, 282; her warm welcome, 290
Molesworth, Lady, 331
Monckton, Sir John, letter from, 434
*Money* in rehearsal again: changes in the cast, 26; magical effect of the reproduction, 30; the full cast, *ibid.*; withdrawn, 42; selected as the opening piece at the Haymarket, 195; the cast, 203; series of morning performances, 214; withdrawn, 217; scene from, played at Pontresina, 256; part of programme of farewell night, 424
Montague, H. J., meeting with, 65; hear of his death, 145
*Moonstone*, the, Wilkie Collins engaged on stage version of, 59; considered too melodramatic for the Prince of Wales's, 63
*Nearly Seven*, monologue by Charles Brookfield, 309
*Nos Intimes*, Sardou's, adaptation of, by Messrs. B. C. Stephenson and Clement Scott, 63; *Peril* in rehearsal, 65

*Odette*, English rights in, bought, 272; its adaptation entrusted to Clement Scott, 285; its difficulties, 286; incident at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, 287; its production—the cast, 289; an 'aggravating' success, 290
Ollier, Mr., offers to take all the stalls for the run of *Diplomacy*, 122
*Our Boys*, the *première* of, 27; Charles Mathews's opinion of, 28
*Ours*, revival of, 61; the cast, 62; farewell revival of, at the Prince of Wales's—the cast, 193; last performances of—the cast, 283; final production of, 404; the cast, 405
*Overland Route, The*, observations taken on a journey to the East, 260; additions to the company for, 297; production and cast, 309

Parkinson, Mr. J. C., his *début* as an actor, 255; romance and reality, 226; a travelling companion, 259; letter on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 388
Parry, John, farewell appearance of, at the Gaiety, 87
Pellegrini, Carlo ('Ape'), Mr. Bancroft sits to, for a portrait, 216; note from, 217
Pellew, E. F., at Brighton, 78
*Peril*, Stephenson and Scott's version of Sardou's *Nos Intimes*, in rehearsal 65; its production—the cast, 74; extraordinary success, 75; revival of, at the Haymarket—the cast, 354
Phelps, Samuel, death of, 152; anecdote of, 153
Pinero, A. W., in *Plot and Passion*, 275; as Diggory, 283; an extract, 298; a commission, 319; the groundwork of his *Lords and Commons*, 348; the rivals. 364; letter from, on

Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 388
Planché, J. R., death of, 221
*Plot and Passion* produced, 275

Quain, Dr., anecdote of, 164

Reade, Charles, and *Masks and Faces*, 39; his ultimate satisfaction with the changes made, 40; presents autograph letter of Margaret Woffington's, 44; converted to Mrs. Bancroft's view of Peg Woffington, 52; his criticism on the acting, 53; his death, 355; his friendship, 356
Ristori, Madame, 183
*Rivals, The*, production of, at the Haymarket, 364-366; the cast, 366
Robertson, J. Forbes-, 139, 153, 156, 349, 350, 365
Robertson, T. W., Mr. Bancroft's tribute to, at the Mansion House banquet, 77
Rorke, Miss Kate, first appearance on the stage, 218
Roselle, Miss Amy, engaged for *Diplomacy*, 138; as Esther Eccles, 157
Rothschild, Mr. A. de, 445

Saint-Germain, M., letter from, 213
Sala, G. A., letter from, 25; his marvellous handwriting, 378
Salvini, Signor, in London, 27; his acting as Othello, 28; G. H. Lewes on the death-scene in *Hamlet*, 29; letter from, to Mrs. Bancroft, *ibid.*
Sambourne, Linley, a souvenir of *Caste*, 321
Sardou, Victorien, letter from, on production of *Diplomacy*, 128; introduction of Mr. Bancroft to, 148; second visit to, 190; his *Daniel Rochat* a disappointment, 215; production of *Fedora*, 311; English rights purchased, 313
*Saturday Review* on Mr. Bancroft's Orloff and Mrs. Bancroft's Countess Zicka in *Diplomacy*, 129, 132
*School*, revival of, at the Haymarket, 217; the cast, 218; resumption of, 233; last performances of, 325
Scott, Clement ('Saville Rowe'), first acquaintance with, 13; commissioned with B. C. Stephenson ('Bolton Rowe') to produce an adaptation of *Nos Intimes*, 63; *Peril* in rehearsal, 65; in Switzerland, 69; *The Vicarage*, one-act play by, 75; *Dora* entrusted to him, with Stephenson, 87; in Paris, 93; his opinion of Mr. Bancroft's Orloff and Mrs. Bancroft's Countess Zicka in *Diplomacy*, 131, 132; adaptation of *Odette* entrusted to, 285; an extract, 420; his 'Valedictory Ode,' 427
*She Stoops to Conquer*, Mrs. Langtry's appearance in at the Haymarket, 278; the *Times* historical notice, 279-281; morning performances of, 285
Simpson, Palgrave, brings back the missing box in triumph, 32; and the peasant child, 66; his *Heads or Tails* produced, 174
Smith, Theyre, morning performance of his play, *A Happy Pair*, 30
*Society*, second revival of, 8; cast of, 12; withdrawn, 20; benefit performance of, for John Clarke, 135; season of 1880-81 closed with, 248
Sothern, visit from, 220; death of, 240; anecdote of, 241; his opinion of Mrs. Bancroft as an actress, 242
Stephenson, B. C. ('Bolton Rowe'), commissioned with Clement Scott ('Saville Rowe') to adapt *Nos Intimes*, 63; *Peril* in rehearsal, 65; produced, 74; *Dora* entrusted to them, 87; letter from, on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 389
Stirling, Mrs., as the Marquise de St. Maur in *Caste*, 319; her brave endurance, 351
Sugden, Charles, joins the company, 74
Sullivan, Sir Arthur, in *Cox and Box*, 183
*Sweethearts* produced, 10; excites attention, *ibid.*; Mrs. Charles Kean on Mrs. Bancroft as Jenny Northcott in, 11; withdrawn, 20; a morning performance, 30; reproduced, 175; part of a 'scratch bill,' 405
Swinburne, Major Paul, on Mrs. Bancroft's Jenny Northcott in *Sweethearts*, 11

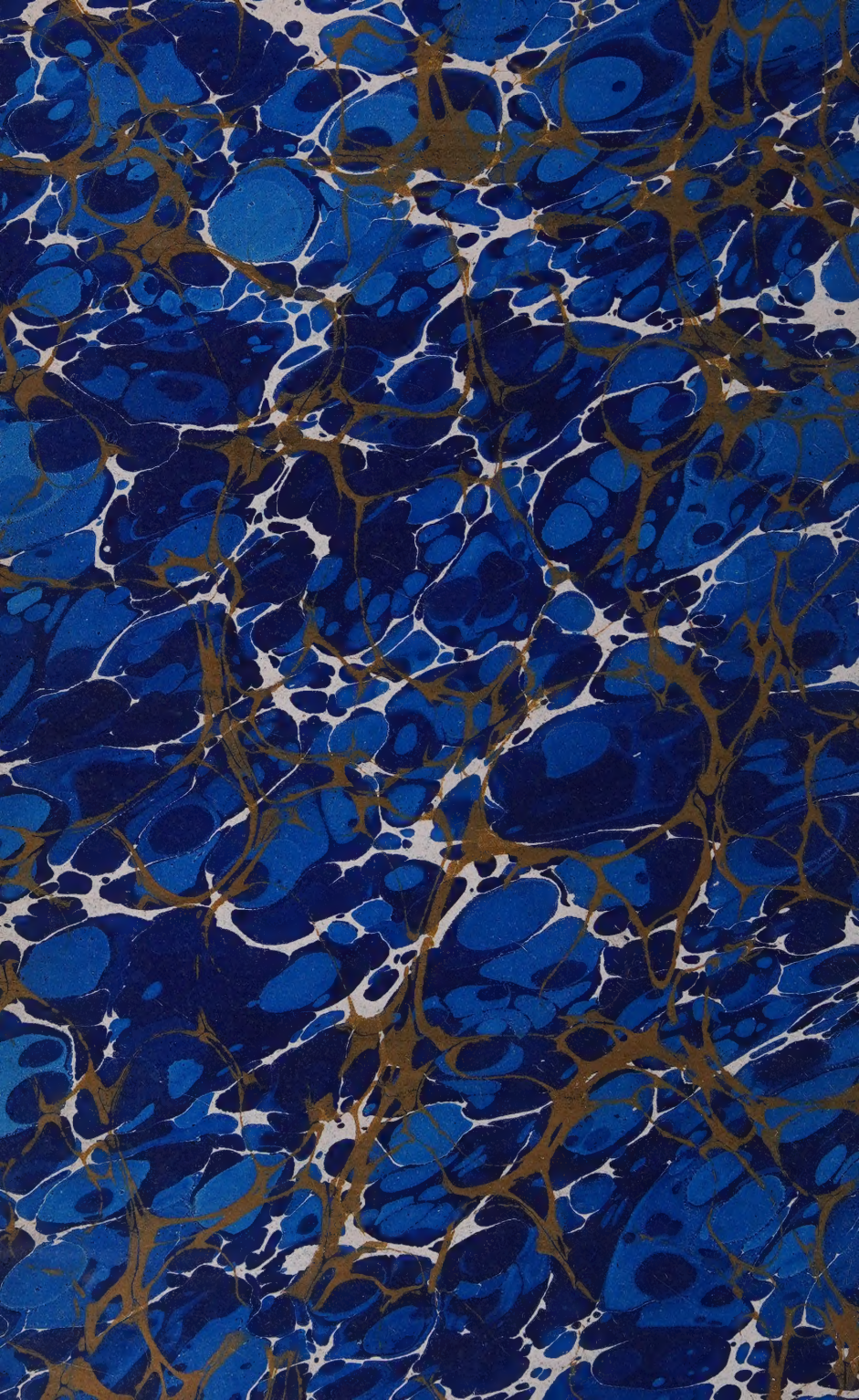
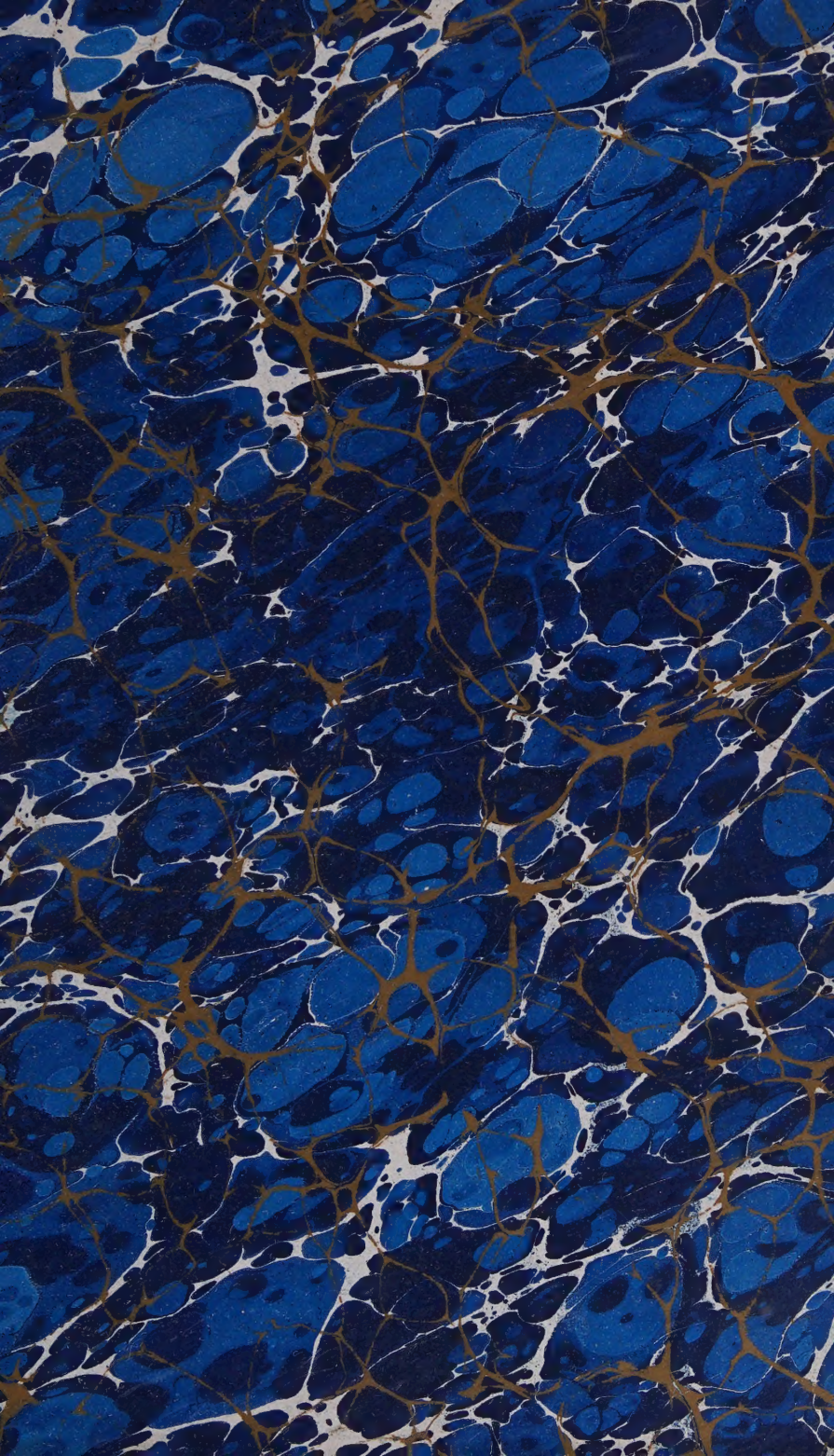
Taylor, Tom, writes additional opening scene to *Masks and Faces*, 40; commissioned to write version of *Les Pattes de Mouche*, 58; the commission withdrawn, 59; *An Unequal Match*, 98; its production—the cast, 116; reduces *To Parents and Guardians* to one scene, 117; death of, 221; his *Plot and Passion* produced—the cast, 275; his *Overland Route* produced—the cast, 309

Terry, Miss Ellen, engaged for Portia in the *Merchant of Venice*, 14; characteristic letter from, *ibid.*; the foundation of her present position, 23; her 'charm,' 25; illness of, 64; goes to the Court Theatre, *ibid.*
Thomas, Mr. Moy, letter from on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 389
*Times*, letter of Mr. Bancroft to, on the production of plays by English authors, 157; notice of Mrs. Langtry's appearance in *She Stoops to Conquer*, at the Haymarket, 279-281
Toole, J. L., in Paris—his disguise, 147; his jest with Clarke, 160; his part in the farewell night, 427
*To Parents and Guardians* reduced to one scene by Tom Taylor, 117

Vandenhoff, George, letter from, on *Masks and Faces*, 56
*Vicarage, The*, one-act play by Clement Scott ('Saville Rowe'), 75; produced—the cast, 93; reproduced, 253; played at Pontresina, 256
*Village, Le*, by Octave Feuillet, foundation of Clement Scott's *The Vicarage*, 75

Wales, Prince of, gives dinner to leading London actors, 284
Wallack, Lester, letter of congratulation from, 195
Walter, Mr. Charles, succeeds Mr. James as business manager, 64
Webster, Benjamin, on Mr. Bancroft's Triplet, 43; reappears in *Money* for Henry Compton's benefit, 89; letter from him on *London Assurance*, 90; proposes 'The King!' 92; his death, 296
Wigan, Alfred, death of, 152
Williams, Mrs. Montagu (Louise Keeley), death of, 85
Wilton, Mr., plays Tubal to Edmund Kean's Shylock, 23
Woffington, Margaret, autograph letter of, 44; Mrs. Bancroft on the character of, 46
Wolseley, Lord, letter from, on Mrs. Bancroft's lines on Tel-el-Kebir, 307
Wood, Mrs. John, joins the company, 297
*World*, the, includes the Bancrofts in its 'Celebrities at Home,' 165
*Wrinkles*, Byron's comedy, a disappointment, 58; produced—the cast, 60; a failure, 61
Wyndham, Charles, at St. Moritz, 301; letter from, 436

Yates, Edmund, verses by, on a *première* at the Prince of Wales's, 124; at Pontresina, 181; an anecdote, 314; at Brighton, 378; letter from, on Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's retirement, 390
Young, Miss Sophie, engaged for *Diplomacy*, 139

THE END.

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